



BOOK REVIEWS

The Unfinished Revolution. Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe. By James Mark. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. xxviii + 312 pp.

James Mark's interest focuses on the criminalization of the communist past and its representation from the position of victims, phenomena manifested in the interaction of public-institutional and individual memory practices.¹ The seven chapters of the book are divided into two parts: the first reconstructs post-1989 memory culture and the second is concerned with personal histories. A total of the 118 interviews were carried out, two thirds in Hungary and one third in Poland and the former Czechoslovakia. Although the chapters are written as case studies from several different previous research subjects, and some have already been published, the commonality of questions definitely gives the book the form of a monograph.

Memory politics have gradually risen to prominence in the region since the mid-1990s, and their purpose, according to Mark, is not to confirm or express power over the past, but to show that it lives on in the present and to confront it. Action is directed at putting a final closure on the past. What has emerged is a "powerful new discourse which asserted that difficult pasts were collective experiences that needed to be addressed and overcome in order for a society to be truly democratic" (p.xv). The result is a right-wing political current focusing on historical memory, whose rhetoric recreates the pre-1989 anti-Communist struggle. It claims that the presence of (former) Communists in political and economic life is evidence that the system has not been overthrown. It secondly reshapes the memory of resistance prior to the political transition so as to present itself as the sole true heir of the former anti-Communist opposition. This is accompanied by the exclusion from the pre-1989 opposition to Communism (or anti-Stalinism in the case of the successor parties) of left-wing groups, which it identifies with the enemy, the former repressors of opposition and their

1 A more detailed review in Hungarian is Máté Zombory, "A bűnös és az áldozat, avagy a posztkommunizmus totalitárius nyelve" [The Perpetrator and the Victim, or the Totalitarian Language of Post-Communism], James Mark: *The Unfinished Revolution. Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe*, *Budapesti Könyvszemle* 24, no. 2. (2012): 112–18.

collaborators. The political program is clear: the revolution must be completed, which means finally excluding Communists from public life.

Mark examines the value-set of the new memory culture through the Romanian presidential history commission and the Polish Institute of National Remembrance, which latter caused an international stir. He sees these institutions, which present the “transition” from the series of crimes constituting Communism to liberal democracy and the securing of human rights, as having the primary ideological role of declaring the break with the party-state system and strengthening identification with the new system. “Here finishing the revolution meant the establishment of official bodies that could assist the dismantling of Communist mentalities through the state-sponsored propagation of new, liberal interpretations of the past.” (p.31).

One chapter discusses museum sites concerned with the Communist past: the former political prison in Sighetu Marmășiei in Romania, the House of Terror in Budapest, the Statue Park in Hungary, Grūtas Park in Lithuania, and the few national museum exhibitions (in Bucharest, Riga and Budapest) devoted to the representation of the Communist past. This chapter seems to have been structured according to museum typology, whereas the next chapter, also concerned with museums, is structured by geography. Here, Mark analyses institutions in the Baltic states, one in a former Soviet political prison, and the other two “occupation museums” which did not fit neatly into the typology of the previous chapter. Mark claims that the exhibitions, whose program proclaim the completion of the revolution, compensate the victims of Communism by criminalizing the past: if the “perpetrators” have not been judicially brought to account or excluded from public life, then they should at least be judged in the cultural sphere. Siting exhibitions presenting “Communism” in former places of political terror makes the political condemnation of Communism and both the individual and national construction of the “victim of Communism” more plausible.² The author focuses his analyses on the “forgotten history” of the sites, in attempting to archaeologically uncover the truth about Communism, the institutions fail to find absolutely conclusive evidence. Mark does not consider how or to what extent the scene of victimization and the memory-site function guarantees historical credibility in museum representation.³

² See Péter Apor, “Eurocommunism: Commemorating Communism in Contemporary Eastern Europe,” in *A European Memory? Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, ed. Bo Strath and Gosia Pakier (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008).

³ On this see e.g. the January 2012 edition, no. 29 of *Theory, Culture & Society*.

The strength of the chapter on Baltic-state institutions is the inclusion of international memory and the geopolitical environment in an analysis of local representation strategies. It examines how the institutions of the new anti-Communist discourse face up to the double international expectation by addressing the Fascist past. In the European integration process, Western organizations set proper commemoration of the Holocaust as an absolute condition of “becoming European”, and in this respect indicated that anti-Communists who supported the Fascists could not be lauded as heroes. Considerable international pressure has also come from Putin-era Russia, where commemoration of the Red Army’s heroic role in liberating Europe from Fascism is increasingly becoming a point of national-imperial pride. In the former Soviet republics, where (except Lithuania) a large Russian-speaking population which settled during the Communist era live, this looks like evidence of a present threat of Russian imperialist aspirations. Mark comes to the conclusion that the Holocaust is included in the Baltic memory culture in a way that does not challenge but rather supports the idea of the nation’s victimization during the era of Communist dictatorship.

The new, reconstructed memory culture, partly via the institutions analyzed in the book, encourages individuals to rewrite their personal past in the categories of “victim” and “resister” on one side and “perpetrator” and “collaborator” on the other. Mark’s interview subjects are from the generation born between 1918 and 1940, whose lives have been shaped by confrontation with the Communist, politicized autobiography, the requirement to weave the right ideological elements into their life story. At major stages of their lives, they have been required, in a public and proper way, to present their past as evidence of their loyalty. Since 1989, this generation has again been confronted with politicized autobiographical norms, and so autobiographical narratives have been rewritten according to the values and norms of the new, post-Communist memory culture.

The author does not stop here, but puts the question of how, as a subject of the hegemonic and homogenizing memory discourse, the individual is capable of rejecting stigmatizing identifications and developing an alternative position. The three chapters based on the interviews discuss conflict situations in which the autobiographical narrative cannot be delivered in the previous way. Only some of the interview respondents, however, react to the dictates of the new discourse.

The life accounts of former party members, for example, could clearly have been analyzed in terms of how they react to being identified as “perpetrators/

accomplices in Communist crimes” as has become prevalent since 1989, and their strategies for demonstrating their democratic commitment. Instead, the analysis focuses on anti-Fascism, which party members up to 1956 had to make part of their public autobiographies as proof of loyalty. The author might have acquired a sharper picture of how criminalizing the Communist past has forced the rewriting of autobiographies if he had focused his analysis of how the subjects coped with their past, not specifically on the anti-Fascist element, which was subsequently compromised by the Communist regimes, but on bonding to the party state and previous ideological commitment (including anti-Fascism).

Mark presents what is at stake in adopting the “victim of Communism” position through analysis of interviews where the former system caused personal suffering for the respondents. One of his important claims is that heroic opposition is absent from the narrative elements of the “anti-Communist autobiography”: refusal of the system meant retreating into the private sphere and refusing all kinds of commitment. In this schema, what provides the political character of the autobiographical narrative is the pairing of retreat into the private sphere with a sense of historic mission through the preservation, in family history, of national values. Becoming a victim appears as the consequence of refusing to cooperate. Mark points out that despite the assertion of being non-political, this autobiographical narrative is formed by the kind of political self-presentation which was prescribed in the Communist system, raising the story of the family past into the century-old history of anti-Communist struggle. At the same time, autobiographical narratives that avoid self-presentation as victim are motivated by the rejection and uncovering of the prevailing anti-Communist discourse. Being a former victim of Communism may bring benefits, but the story of being a victim of Communism for subjects of the “anti-anti-Communist autobiography” is not a matter of relating true experiences so much as adopting a retrospective identity whose black-and-white features cover up complex and varying relationships with the Communist system. For the maneuver of refusing the victim position, there are no ready models, as is revealed by the interview subjects’ constant attention to the possible implications of their narrative and word use. They are concerned not with the justice of the past but with the injustice of the currently-prevailing perspective and the lack of a position permitting true speech. The struggle is no longer between rival experiences of the past.

The boundaries to speaking out are also addressed in the analysis of interviews with Hungarian victims and witnesses of rape by the Red Army. Mark’s

conclusion is that the subjects could only speak up in terms of the prevailing anti-Communist discourse, presenting themselves as part of a nation that became a victim of Communism, and their story as an example of national victimization. Thus the repression suffered during several decades of taboo is put in parallel with the themes of repression of the nation by a foreign power, and the coming out in public about the trauma after 1989 is put in parallel with the liberation of the nation. The opportunities to speak out were of course basically for women, because according to the prevailing discourse, Hungarian women embodying the nation were raped by barbarian men, and thus the position of Hungarian men was also undermined. In this case, too, the author examines the options for opposing the demands of the prevailing narrative. Since the generation involved has no non-political narrative scheme at its disposal for verbalizing the atrocities of the Red Army, the only way of refusing the constraints of the prevailing discourse is to deny or marginalize the rape in the past.

Unfortunately, the interview analyses go no further than illustrating each statement with quotations. There are relatively few extracts from the interviews: in the final chapter, for example, based on 31 interviews, the author quotes one brief detail from each of 15 interviews, and only makes sporadic mentions of the structural specifics of the narrative. This would have been useful for determining the biographical significance of each theme and past event. Mark frequently links this significance to the interview subjects’ political or ideological affinities or their origins, which could be problematic in some cases. In extreme cases, it could lead to tautologies of the kind that somebody exercises the options of an anti-Communist discourse which is defined as right wing because he or she comes from an anti-Communist, right-wing/Catholic environment.

Mark’s premise is therefore that political dissatisfaction in post-Communism is concentrated on the lack of a revolutionary break between systems, the presence of former Communists in public life being identified as evidence of the survival of Communism. The only substantial criticism is the one-sidedness of the chosen conceptual framework, which defines the idea of completing the revolution as purely a right-wing discourse. The discussion might have accommodated, for example, the modernizing current citing Western examples, most of all the “German model”, which blames the surviving Communist mentality for the democratic deficit. In other words: is there another program for completion of the revolution? The “left-wing program” might have been considered, offsetting the impression that the struggle against the persistence of the Communist past is a right-wing privilege. A better procedure would be to

first identify the discourses which set as their objective the termination of the persistence of the Communist past and only then examine whether they have become resources for one political side or the other.

Since the book did not set out to historically examine how post-Communist discourses have shaped relations with the past, it should not be taken to task for not doing so. Nonetheless, how the political current known as “new anti-Communism” rose to prevalence in the region, how completion of the revolution has become a right-wing program, and what political forces were competing in the post-1989 period are important questions. Although Mark does take into account the contest between the continental memory traditions of East and West, he does not deal with their interactions or with the complex effect by which the Holocaust memory has become the model for the representation of Communism. I think this may give us an answer to why historical catastrophes, cultural trauma,⁴ victim rivalry⁵ and personal witness⁶ have become the primary factors of European memory politics,⁷ or in other words, why the “post-Communist totalitarian language of ‘victim’, ‘collaborator’ and ‘resister’” (p.xxviii) have risen to prevalence.

Translated by Alan Campbell

Máté Zombory

The Politics of “National Character”: A Study in Interwar East European Thought. (Routledge Studies in Comparative Political Thought). By Balázs Trencsényi. London–New York: Routledge, 2012. 227 pp.

In his most recent study on the history of national characterology in Eastern Europe, Balázs Trencsényi provides the reader with an in-depth and comparative analysis of intellectual discourses on national specificity in Romania, Hungary, and Bulgaria respectively. This highly erudite study is published in Routledge’s series of “Studies in Comparative Political Thought,” which aims to “change the landscape of political theory by encouraging deeper comparative reflection on the structure and character of the discipline and to arrive at a richer understanding of the nature of the political” (p.II). It is in this ambitious spirit that the book is written, and it is the author’s background in philosophy that lends the study an impressive level of creative intellectual interdisciplinarity. Trencsényi, Associate Professor of history at the Central European University, has written extensively on the topic of modernity and identity discourses in East European political thought and belongs to a very exclusive category of scholars intellectually equipped to undertake a comparative study of three countries, modulating virtuously between the national case studies and covering an exhaustive range of intellectual activity in all of them.

The author’s main objective is to demonstrate the development of discourses of national specificity and national character in the interwar period, in relation to the advent of radical nationalism and transforming notions of historicity and temporality. Seemingly antagonistic concepts such as modernism and anti-modernism, autochthonism and Westernisation, constitute the conceptual framework for the analysis of the divergent discourses on national specificity in the three countries. In his approach to the complex subject of national characterology, Trencsényi is inspired by Carl Schmitt’s concept of ‘political romanticism’ and Armin Mohler’s idea of ‘conservative revolution’, originally referring to the cultural and political currents in post-World War I Germany. Both of these concepts accommodate the portrayal of the long-term evolution of identity discourses, and connect them to intellectual developments preceding the interwar period. Taking into account the influence of older currents, like Romanticism’s role in the disconnection of national institutions and national identity, or Nietzschean justifications of collective egotism, the character of the

4 Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka, eds., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

5 Jean-Michel Chaumont, *La concurrence des victimes: Génocide, identité, reconnaissance* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010).

6 Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca–London: Cornell University Press, 2006).

7 See Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Jeffrey C. Alexander, “On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The ‘Holocaust’ from War Crime to Trauma Drama,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 5, no. 1 (2002): 5–85.

interwar discourse is determined by the unprecedented association of national character with the problem of political modernity. Traditional linear conceptions of history were in many cases replaced with a new cyclicality, linking the realization of the primordial national to modernism as much as to anti-modernism, and complicating historicism's traditional call to restore some glorious past. The dehistoricization of national character and changing attitudes towards time itself are recurring themes in the book and are discussed with considerable profundity.

After having introduced these general themes in the introductory chapter, Trencsényi points out that, even though they may all have played an important part in the countries under scrutiny, the three local discourses are not in the least identical. Initially, the author had planned to include only two case studies in his comparative analysis, but he decided to include Bulgaria as well in order to accentuate the differences and similarities between national discourses in Eastern Europe. Although the book focuses primarily on developments in the interwar period, the case studies are embedded in their historical contexts, and each chapter introduces the reader to the early modern and (especially) nineteenth-century debates on national characterology as well. This is important, since many of the interwar debates on the topic of national identity refer back to these earlier discourses.

The first case study is Romania, which consisted of the Old Kingdom of Romania and Transylvania prior to 1918. In his investigation of the historical roots of Romanian characterology, Trencsényi points out that the advent of political journalism, a lively pamphlet culture, and a new public sphere in the 1830s and 40s revolutionized the debate on Romanian identity, divided between revolutionary and evolutionary thinkers. Especially in the wake of the national-liberal revolutions of 1848, the question of whether the Romanians should follow foreign examples (as proposed by Mihail Kogălniceanu) or, instead, focus on their own autochthonous culture became a pressing one. A new phase in the debate occurred in 1860, when the *Junimist* movement, championed by Titu Maiorescu and inspired by German philosophy and Romanticism, challenged the dominant narrative of Romania's undefiled Roman origins. The *Junimists* propagated an unprecedented new version of Romanian history, in which they accentuated the evolution and organicity of the people, while at the same time criticizing modernity and its detrimental effect on the national character. This organic conception of national identity radicalized towards the end of the nineteenth century and gave shape to A. D. Xenopol's Romanian adaptation of *Völkerverpsychologie* and the idea that a people without a history was necessarily

a people without character (D. D. Drăghicescu). Through the autochtonists, who sought to reconcile political modernism with traditional and rural culture, the Romanian self-image had become a very ethnically orientated one by the early twentieth century. This trend radicalized in the interwar period, especially in the works of those considered part of the politically divergent *young generation*. Trencsényi traces the intellectual career of influential thinkers like Emil Cioran and Mircea Eliade and highlights their contributions to what he refers to as the 'a-historical turn' in Romanian national thought. To Eliade, myth and symbol, not history, became the primary denominators of national identity. A nation had to transcend its own history and aspire to universality. It was this paradoxical blend of nationalism and universalism, characteristic of the interwar period, that contributed to the emergence of a Romanian brand of Fascism.

In the next chapter, Hungary is subjected to a similar discourse analysis. After having traced the concept of Hungary back to a multi-ethnic, pre-modern nobility, Trencsényi outlines the relationship between these earlier ideas and nineteenth-century debates on national character. The Hungarian intelligentsia, more influenced by Herderian philosophy than the Romanians, developed (especially from the 1860s onwards) a strongly ethno-cultural sense of identity, which is interesting in a country that eventually consisted of over fifty percent non-Hungarians. Attempts to Magyarize an ethnically mixed population and create a national school of philosophy based on national characteristics balanced between reason and sentiment (Gusztáv Szontagh) are scrutinized and presented in their relation to opposing intellectual camps. Many of the main themes resemble those from the previous chapter on Romania, e.g. the discussions on the importation of foreign culture (which those connected to the periodical *Szép Szó* applauded), and the ambivalent relationship between political progress and cultural specificity. Interestingly, the Hungarian discourse of the interwar period resembled the Romanian one in that the nation became a spiritual category (Bálint Hóman), rather than a character based on national history, and that the political ideas of the new generation were so amorphous and ambivalent that they formed the intellectual breeding ground for later generations of fascists and communists alike. A typically Hungarian feature is the Asian, nomadic component of the interwar debate. The Hungarians differed from the rest of Europe, since they regarded themselves as descendants of a wandering steppe people which embodied the 'soul of Asia', rather than that of the West. Consequently, Sándor Karácsony could argue that national characteristics typically considered vices in a European context were actually virtues from the oriental perspective

and fundamental constituents of the Hungarian soul. Amidst this myriad of competing and overlapping models of identification and ‘alternative histories’, it is remarkable that the author hardly mentions the Habsburg legacy at all. Did the Austro-Hungarian past leave no traces in post-1918 Hungarian characterology? Furthermore, the Finno-Ugric connection, which at times was rather unpopular in Hungary but which had a major effect on ideas about the origins of the Hungarians, is entirely discarded.

The last case study, Bulgaria, is the only Slavic nation in Trencsényi’s comparative study. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, the protochronistic idea that Slavs were the original progenitors of European civilisation played a significant part in the Bulgarian identity-discourse, arguably in part to compensate for the very narrow historical and institutional foundation of modern Bulgarian identity. One of the primary markers of this discourse was a sense of ‘inbetweenness’ and belatedness, of being caught between ‘not anymore’ and ‘not yet’. By tying the Bulgarian nation to the former greatness of the Slavs and even to that of the Indo-Europeans, the ancient cultures responsible for the cultural and political oppression of Bulgaria (Byzantine Greece and the Turks), as well as Western civilisation (e.g. ancient Gaul), could be presented as being indebted to and having originated from the Bulgarians’ mythical ancestors. These images of prehistoric greatness notwithstanding, many Bulgarian intellectuals came to the agonizing conclusion that modern Bulgarians were barbarians, and that the Turks, who functioned as the ‘significant others’ with which the Bulgarians contrasted themselves, were to blame for this. In order to achieve national emancipation, Bulgarians have looked to foreign examples like Germany and even Japan, and to a more authentic pagan past, before Byzantine Christianity had defiled the free and sensitive national spirit. Inspired by Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, Bulgarian intellectuals like Pencho P. Slaveykov envisioned a pagan resurrection, a messianic return to primordial Bulgarianness. After 1918, in the wake of the traumatic Second Balkan War, the Bulgarian brand of national psychology, *narodnopsibologia*, became an important factor in the formulation of Bulgarian identity. Throughout the interwar period, the lack of historical continuity posed a serious problem for Bulgarian intellectuals, who sought their refuge in *narodnopsibologia* (Naydew Sheytanov) and glorifications of the medieval past (Peter Mutafchiev).

In the final chapter, the author offers an outline of the “common features and factors of divergence” in his comparative study, and concludes that, although the developments in all three countries are in many respects similar, the regional

character of the three discourses should not be downplayed; they all had to “cook with local ingredients”. In all three cases, Trencsényi identifies nineteenth-century Romanticism as the starting point of the modern identity discourse, and crucial years like 1918, 1933 and 1940 as turning and breaking points in their intellectual development. In the conclusion he also provides the reader with a concise overview of the legacy of these interwar identity discourses after 1945, when some of their anti-Western tendencies found themselves strangely in line with Soviet ideology. The trauma of being considered peripheral and not fully Europeanized, at a time when Europe itself was entering a period of ideological crisis, has in many ways determined the ambivalent and antagonistic position of Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria towards the West, and has left a mark on their national self-images. The herculean task of describing, analysing, and comparing these complicated developments in three equally complex case studies makes the work necessarily a densely argued intellectual *tour de force* in which little space remains for the proper introduction and contextualisation of its many protagonists. Arguably, the book may, with its 227 pages, simply be too thin to do justice to the immense complexity of Trencsényi’s endeavour. However, to those properly introduced to the intellectual history of all three countries and Eastern Europe in general, this study constitutes an innovative and fascinating contribution to the field.

Simon Halink

Horvátország a 7. századtól napjainkig [Croatia from the Seventh Century up to the Present Day]. By Dénes Sokcsevits. Budapest: Mundus, 2011. 846 pp.

Once upon a time there was an 800 year-old Hungaro–Croatian confederation. Croatia was the only single 'foreign' state that permanently stood under the reign of the Holy Crown of Hungary. An occupation army from Hungary was never stationed on Croatian territory—it simply was not necessary. The coexistence of these states was based on a general agreement and was secured by several internal and external interests. This peaceful coexistence made this confederation unique in Eastern Europe. In general Croatia had had no secessionist ambitions, even when the existence of the Hungarian kingdom was thrown into question by the Mongol invasion of 1241 and the interregna of 1301–1308 and 1526. The first considerable differences appeared in the seventeenth century, when the Croatian ambitions for autonomy gained strength. An armed conflict between the two states broke out only once during the 800 year period of coexistence (in 1848–1849). But even that war was far from being a real obstacle in the later political negotiations between Hungary and Croatia. Despite these facts, both national historiographies turn a blind eye to the history of this coexistence.

The book by Dénes Sokcsevits is the first monograph about Croatia published in Hungary.¹ The author based his work primarily on Hungarian and Croatian archival and secondary sources. The book is very informative with regard to historical events and it has a clear train of thought. The different periods are presented through political, economic, social and church history. The author sometimes focuses his investigation on a region like Dalmatia or Slavonia, sometimes on a town like Trogir/Trau and Dubrovnik/Ragusa, sometimes on a family like the Šubić family, or sometimes on a politician like Martinuzzi Fráter

György/Juraj Martinušević. His main aim is to demonstrate that the history of country and nation cannot be regarded as a straight line of historical events. In contrast with traditional Croatian historiography, which constructs a simplified history of Croatia with the nation in its center, Sokcsevits intends to present the history of the state as a whole made up of several different mosaic tiles. It is a particular virtue of the author's approach that he interprets and analyzes each and every disputed question and opinion with regard to Croatian history. One should also note that Sokcsevits does not fail to deal with problems to which Hungarian historiography has turned a blind eye (e.g. why the Croatian nobles refused to join the uprising led by Rákóczi).

From a structural point of view the book can be divided into three major parts. The first part deals with the history of Croatia until 1918, focusing on Hungarian–Croatian coexistence and later the process of succession. The differences of opinion and interests between the political elites of the two states appeared in the second half of the fifteenth century, when the Hungarian king proved unable to protect the Croatian counties from Ottoman attacks. That is the very beginning of the relationship between Croatia and the Habsburg dynasty. Two important phenomena of the seventeenth century influenced the Hungarian–Croatian relationship profoundly in the long run. On the one hand a difference in the interpretation of constitutional law emerged between the two states. While the Croatian estates began to emphasize that the state connections were based on equal rights, so Croatia had to be regarded as a joint and not as a subordinate state, the Hungarians insisted on their concept of Croatia as a conquered state (i.e. in their perception Croatia had been conquered by the Hungarian kingdom in the eleventh century). On the other hand, the aristocratic conspiracy against the Habsburg dynasty in 1671 proved an especially tragic turning-point in the relationship between the two states. The conspiracy was organized by families that were the main representatives of Hungarian–Croatian coexistence. After exposing the plans for an uprising, the Habsburgs practically ruined the families of Zrínyi/Zrinski and Frangepan.

The period of 1790–1848 can best be characterized by the fact that the national idea gained primacy both in Hungary and in Croatia. Due to the perception of Hungarian nationalism as a threat, Croatian politicians began to build up closer connections with Vienna, and the Habsburgs refused to take the Hungarian opinions into consideration in their Croatian policy. According to Sokcsevits, however, even in that period both nations shared a common feature: their nation-building process and language reforms were modeled on the same

¹ The most crucial Hungarian historians dealt with the Croatian history: Endre Arató, *Kelet-Európa története a 19. században* [The History of East-Europe in the Nineteenth Century] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971); László Bíró, *A jugoszláv állam 1918–1939* [The Yugoslavian State 1918–1939] (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2010); László Katus, "A nemzetiségi kérdés és Horvátország története a 20. század elején" [The Nationality Question and the History of Croatia in the Early Twentieth Century], in *Magyarország története*, vol. 2 of 7, ed. Péter Hanák (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978); Gyula Miskolczy, *A horvát kérdés története és irományai a rendi állam korában*. [The History of the Croatian Question and Its Writing in the Period of the Estate State], vols. 1–2. (Budapest: MTT, 1927); Emil Niederhauser, *A nemzeti megújulási mozgalmak Kelet-Európában* [National Renewal Movements in Eastern Europe] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977); Imre Rész, *Kapcsolatok és kereszttutak* [Connections and Crossroads] (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2004).

patterns. It was Lajos Kossuth who in 1848 questioned the autonomy of Croatia on the basis of constitutional law, and it was also Kossuth who adamantly rejected any proposal regarding the federative transformation of Hungary. Furthermore, he intended to make the Hungarian language compulsory south of the Sava. It was therefore hardly surprising that the Croats could be easily instrumentalized by Vienna during the 1848–1849 Hungarian War of Independence. It was the first time that these countries had gone to war with each other. It is worth noting, however, that the troops of Banus Jelačić were regarded as enemies by the Croats of the Transdanubian counties. And as a “reward” for having sided with the Habsburgs, Croatia lost its autonomy and sank to the level of a crown-land.

Both political elites turned a blind eye to the consequences of the 1848–1849 events. They proved unable to reach an acceptable compromise during the negotiations of 1866–1868. On the one hand, the Habsburg Empire was transformed into a Dual Monarchy, which was obviously unacceptable to the majority of the nations of the empire. On the other hand, the Croatian–Hungarian Settlement in 1868 was judged by the Croatian politicians as a bad compromise. It had the potential, however, to bring about positive change. It was Ferenc Deák who suggested a real union and broad autonomy for Croatia, but his suggestions were ignored by the other members of the Hungarian delegation (Gyula Andrassy and Menyhért Lónyay). It is also an unknown detail of the 1868 negotiations between Pest-Buda and Zagreb that Deák warned his Croatian colleagues against South-Slav unity. According to Deák, South-Slav unification would be led by Belgrad and not Zagreb. On the whole, Croatia could attain autonomy than it had set out to win, but it is important to mention that the autonomy it did obtain was *unique* in Europe at the time. The Home Rule Bill, elaborated by William E. Gladstone in 1880, was modeled on the Croatian–Hungarian Settlement. (The British parliament refused to accept the bill, because the members wanted to save imperial integrity.²)

After the Settlement of 1868 was accepted, the quality of the relationship between Pest-Buda and Zagreb went from bad to worse; trust was gradually lost. Both sides began to pursue a policy based on emotions. One illustrative example suffices to demonstrate the regrettable aftermath: Croatia had a bad economic structure and taxation moral in the second half of the nineteenth century, and it was one of the most underdeveloped countries within Austria–Hungary

(pp.400–1). The Hungarian authorities tried to transform the economic structure and develop a taxpayer culture on an administrative basis. (The construction of an effective bourgeois state can be characterized by authoritative methods in the whole of Eastern Europe – even in Hungary.) The structural reforms were regarded by the Croats, however, as new forms of oppression. At this point, citing the Czech example, Sokcsevits refutes the popular thesis of Croatian historiography according to which independence was the most important condition of economic development. By 1918 the dual system of Austria–Hungary had fallen. The political forces of Croatia anticipated the total defeat and the reorganization of the empire; but it remained an illusion.

The second part of the book deals with the position of Croatia within Yugoslavia. The creation of the new state was due first and foremost to the policies of Great Britain and France. The concept of the new federal state was laid on uncertain foundations from the outset. On the one hand, the idea of a united South-Slav nation was a simple utopia. On the other hand, the most crucial assurance of internal state cohesion was the violence practiced by the government on administrative and military grounds. The responsibility of the different Croatian political groups must also be emphasized. In the very moment of the collapse of Austria–Hungary it was only Stjepan Radić who consistently protested against giving up all Croatian national ambitions during the negotiations with Belgrad. In the end Croatia became part of a South-Slav state that was ruled by the Serbs. The Croats, who were accustomed to living in a constitutional state, found themselves in a Balkan country where democracy and state administration stood at a lower level than before 1918. The federal government adopted a violent policy towards Croatia and solved the main political problems with the use of security forces. The Serb politicians were simply unwilling to make any compromises until 1939. The sabor was not convoked for 20 years. The new situation provoked new social ruptures in the twentieth century. The transformed party structure of Croatia was characterized by more or less radical attitudes towards autonomy, federation and independence. The political ambitions restricted and hindered by violence and the disappointment in the federal states resulted in a complex set of armed conflicts in World War II. There was a war between Croats and Serbs on the one hand but also between Croats and Germans and Italians. The warriors of the Ustaša movement and civil organizations fought against the communist partisan divisions. The last scene of genocides can be regarded as particularly tragic, because it was supported by the British and Soviet armies. The allied forces

² Imre Rész, *Kapcsolatok és kereszttutak*, 120–21.

handed thousands of Croat prisoners of war over to the partisan troops of Tito, who let them be butchered. The denial and memory of this event have remained one of the heaviest burdens in the relationships between the South Slav nations.

The second Yugoslav federal state was born in blood and could only have been governed by a dictator. Although the system of Tito brought some novelties, such as federalism and the intention of assuring equal rights to all nationalities, it was characterized by state violence, the inability of the political leadership to reach compromises, dictatorship, and collective amnesia forced upon the population. The Yugoslav states in the interwar and post-war periods shared another common feature: the most essential external cohesive force of the federal state was primarily the interests of the great powers. The fake propaganda image of Tito's Yugoslavia, according to which the Croats could be regarded as fascists and the Serbs as victims of the war, also proved a grave burden. According to one of the extreme but tenacious assessments of Tito's state, the 1960s and 1970s were a period of economic development and material growth. Since the archival materials are far from completely processed, Sokcsevits' aim is to approach the history of the second Yugoslavia from many points of view. The conclusion of the second part of the book is that Yugoslavia was on the verge of collapse in the late 1980s from all points of view and its existence was maintained only by the Western great powers.

Although there are numerous monographs and articles dealing with the period between 1991 and 1995, because many of the archival sources remain closed, the history of the war of independence has to be interpreted extremely cautiously. Sokcsevits has done so. The interpretation of the events is laconic and analytical. He outlines the psychological path that led to the bloody showdowns, lists the acts of violence committed by both sides, and criticizes European policy, which was unable to handle the armed conflict. The very last chapter of the book summarizes the post-war history of Croatia.

The author often reflects on the assertions of Croatian historiography. According to Sokcsevits, the majority of historians more or less submit to the national discourse. They are inclined to neglect Hungarian–Croatian coexistence and search instead for separatist movements in the past. (Sokcsevits often compares and exemplifies the differences between the conclusions drawn by Hungarian historians and the conclusions reached by Croatian historians; see the maps on pp.270–71). The author criticizes the East European view of the British historiography as well. According to Sokcsevits, even today the majority of British historians approach the history of this region from the point of view

of the (imperial) British state, and they are therefore unable to understand local problems and realities (see the assessment of fascism and communism).

As far as the weaknesses of the book are concerned, the presentation of the Hungarian–Croatian relationships is sometimes too dominant. In order to demonstrate the main problems of Croatian history better, Sokcsevits would have to provide a wider historical background and give more reference points (about the Orthodox commonwealth of the Balkans, the overseas empire of Venice, the imperial ambitions of the Habsburg dynasty and the nation building processes in Italy). It is not clear how the different territories (like Dalmatia or Slavonia) and social groups (like the Italian speaking Dalmatians) and strata became “Croatian” in the nineteenth century.³ The author often refers to how the Serbian Orthodox Church made “Serbs” out of the different Orthodox groups of Vlachs and Balkan Slavs. This statement, however, is also true in the case of the Croatian Catholic Church: it was not just the Orthodox population that had escaped from the Middle and South Balkans. Dalmatia, Szerémség/Srem and Határőrvidék/Vojna krajina (Military Frontier) were the last station for Catholic Albanians as well. E.g. Arbanas (in Hungarian Orbonás, ital. Borgo Erizzo) near Zara and the Catholic villages of the regiment of Pétervárad / Petrovaradin were established by Albanians, and it was the Croatian national church that made them Croatian in the nineteenth century. (Not to mention the origins of several villages in Slavonia that were established by Hungarians from Transdanubia.)

According to Sokcsevits, Croatian history only began to share close affinities with Serbian history in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (pp.200–2). Considering that the abovementioned nations lived next to each other and spoke closely related languages, this claim needs to be challenged, too. The Christianization of the Serb territories was organized in Rome, and not until the thirteenth century was it decided that the Serb state would be Orthodox. The Serbs were part of the Catholic world for centuries.⁴ Furthermore, South Dalmatia had connections to the Serb *župas* that were similar to the connections between Croatia and Middle-Dalmatia.⁵

3 Cf. Konrad Clewing, *Staatlichkeit und nationale Identitätsbildung: Dalmatien in Vormärz und Revolution* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2001).

4 Cf. Viktor Novak, “The Slavonic-Latin Symbiosis in Dalmatia during the Middle Ages,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 32, no. 78 (1953): 1–28.

5 It follows from the foregoing that according to the writer of this review the pope of Duklja is neither part of Croatian nor Serbian history, he belongs to the history of *Duklja*.

In the chapters dealing with the history and the collapse of the second Yugoslavia, Sokcsevits does not touch upon one essential factor: the Tito system tolerated and contributed to organized crime. Furthermore, Tito instrumentalized crime to promote his political aims: several intellectuals and politicians of the opposition were killed by criminals in the service of the Communist Party. Organized crime became an independent factor after 1989–1991 and played a significant role in the South-Slav wars. The clarification of this role calls for complex and refined research.

The writing of the history of a nation or a country can never be finished. As time passes, new sources and approaches emerge that raise new questions and offer new answers. Sokcsevits's book, however, will remain a valuable part of this ongoing conversation in the long run.

Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics

A szlovák nemzet születése: Ľudovít Štúr és a szlovák társadalom a 19. századi Magyarországon [The Birth of the Slovak Nation: Ľudovít Štúr and Slovak Society in Hungary in the Nineteenth Century]. By József Demmel. Pozsony: Kalligram, 2011. 373 pp.

After publishing an innovative collection of papers under the title *The Whole of Slovakia Fit on a Raft: Studies on the Slovak History of Nineteenth Century Hungary*,¹ the young historian József Demmel wrote an important monograph about Ľudovít Štúr (1815–1856), the most important figure of modern Slovak nationalism. Demmel, a research fellow at the Research Institute of the National Self-Government of Slovaks in Hungary in Békéscsaba, is held by many to be the emerging star of historical Slovak studies in Hungary. By writing on Štúr, Demmel chooses a hot topic, as the interpretation of the mid-nineteenth-century Slovak linguist-politician radically differs in Hungarian and Slovak historiographies. Hungarian historians generally neglected him; Demmel's book, which is based on his PhD thesis at the University of Budapest, is the first monograph about Štúr in Hungarian ever. If Hungarian authors commented on his activities, they mostly treated him as a Russia-based traitor and troublemaker without any genuine popular support.² At the same time, Štúr became the indisputable core hero of the national fight in the Slovak national canon.³ Since

1 József Demmel, "Egész Szlovákia elfért egy tutajon..." *Tanulmányok a 19. századi Magyarország szlovák történelméről* [The Whole of Slovakia Fit on a Raft: Studies on the Slovak History of Nineteenth-Century Hungary] (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2009).

2 See László Csorba, *A tizenkilencedik század története* [The History of the Nineteenth Century] (Budapest: Pannonica, 2000): Štúr is mentioned as the organizer of Slovak cultural life in the 1840s, but his activities during and after the 1848 revolution are not addressed (p.111). In a standard book in Hungarian university education, András Gergely, ed., *Magyarország története a 19. században* [The History of Hungary in the Nineteenth Century] (Budapest: Osiris, 2003), Gergely interprets Štúr's activities as unrealistic, lacking popular support, and in fact contributing to Viennese neo-absolutism (p.248).

3 The heyday of the Štúr-hagiography was the 1950s and 1960s, marked by the publication of Štúr's correspondence, books and pamphlets (the most important: Jozef Ambruš, ed., *Ľudovít Štúr: Dielo v piatich zväzkoch* [The Works of Ľudovít Štúr in Five Volumes] (Bratislava: Slovenské vydavateľstvo krásnej literatúry, 1955–57). The Marxist canon was fixed in 1956, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the death of Štúr with a representative conference: *Ľudovít Štúr: život a dielo 1815–1856: zborník materiálov z konferencie Historického ústavu Slovenskej akadémie vied* [Ľudovít Štúr: Life and Works, 1815–1856: Proceedings of a Conference of the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences] (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Slovenskej Akadémie Vied, 1956). An uncritical and hagiographic attitude was present in the Western emigration, too (Jozef Kirschbaum, *Ľudovít Štúr: and His Place in the Slavic World* (Winnipeg: Slovak Institute, 1958). The first critical attempts were published as late as the 2000s (a thematic issue of the journal *OS*, no. 1 (2007).

the 1880s thousands of works of academic and popular literature were devoted to Štúr, which anachronistically canonized his figure and thus prevented any critical approach. It goes without saying that these parallel running narratives were made for “inner use” (for the respective national communities), so they never met. The goal of Demmel was to undermine both interpretations in order to provide an understanding of Štúr that can be valid both in Slovakia and Hungary. Demmel’s ambition is without doubt challenging, as he could hardly rely on the secondary literature of the canon, but rather had to explore a vast number of primary sources and find an appropriate method to avoid falling in the trap of reproducing politically biased ideas.

To solve the problem of parallel national master narratives, Demmel distances himself from the classical, chronological and not thematically based style of biographies of “great men”. Instead, he suggests a thick description à la Geertz of the social contexts and individual choices as a method (pp.23–24). Only thus can the canonized, stable and anachronistic image of Štúr be deconstructed and replaced with a living and dynamic figure, who made his decisions in a complex social environment the members of which cannot simply be divided into good and bad individuals (pp.19–24). However, this method implies a certain fragmentation, as it does not permit the construction of a linear life story. Yet Demmel consciously undertakes this risk, which results in a book resembling more a loose collection of essays than a coherent monograph.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first part is dominated by the perspective of the individual. In the first chapter Demmel carefully analyzes the social strategy of the Štúr family, which led through several generations of weavers in the Northwestern Hungarian town of Trencsén (in Slovakian Trenčín) to Ľudovít’s father Samuel, who became a teacher in the Lutheran elementary school in Zayugróc (in Slovakian Uhrovec). The other main topic of the chapter is the Lutheran environment in which Štúr began his career. The second chapter examines a well-known topos of the Štúr hagiography regarding the origins of his national identity; here Demmel proves the deficiency of the Slovak national canon by combining a critical reading of the sources and some Hungarian secondary literature which has been largely neglected by the canon-making historians. Here the sources enable Demmel to discredit the Slovak national interpretation, but they do not permit him to offer an alternative understanding; the specific reason why Štúr subscribed to the Slovak national idea remains unclear, much as it remains unclear when he made this decision. The third and fourth chapters are devoted to an issue crucial in any individual

life story but fitting into the hagiographic picture of the national hero only with some difficulty: the financial background of Štúr. Coming from a family with a modest income, Štúr had to face financial difficulties throughout his life. He worked as private tutor for several families, however, the wide range of his employers can be explained only by the fact that he was motivated by varying considerations at different times of his life, such as his Slovak national vision and his membership in the Lutheran Church. The latter was the case when he worked for the Prónay family, the head of which, János, was well-known for his support for Lajos Kossuth, Štúr’s greatest rival. From a Slovak nationalist angle, this job can hardly be understood, but a thick description of the Lutheran society of Upper Hungary provides a more plausible interpretation. The fifth and sixth chapters examine Štúr’s controversial relation to the nobility. The Slovak national canon is dominated by the view that Štúr’s main opponents were nationalist Magyar gentrymen, with the exception of one particular, pro-Slovak family, the Osztrólczyks. Replacing this black-and-white picture, Demmel positions Štúr’s relation to the nobility into the patron-client pattern, still an important motif in late feudal Hungary. The last chapter of this section investigates Štúr from a gender perspective and deals also with his alleged homosexuality.

While the first part of the book examines Štúr’s life story from his individual perspective, the second part is devoted to an analysis of the social environment and political conditions in which he worked. Demmel analyzes first Štúr’s unquestionably most relevant deed, the making of the Slovak literary language. Demmel seeks the motivations and possible options for the creation of the standard Slovak language. He points out the important yet incidental role of the Slovak speaking nobility of the Tatra region and then puts it into the Slovak speaking public space of contemporary Hungary. By investigating the subscription data of literary yearbooks and newspapers and the Tatrín association, Demmel is able to provide a detailed composition of the potential supporters of the Slovak national movement, mostly Lutheran provincial intellectuals, teachers, ministers and some members of the petty nobility of the Tatra Mountains. One of the most interesting parts of the book deals with Štúr’s activity as a member of the last feudal Diet of Hungary in 1847–1848. Traditionally, the Slovak national canon cast Štúr’s role in the parliament as that of an advocate of Slovak national ideology, indeed, as a friend of and spokesman for the people among the oligarchic Magyar gentrymen. First, Demmel examines the city of Zólyom (in Slovakian Zvolen), which delegated Štúr to the Diet, and finds that a mere two dozen local aldermen voted for him, indeed, to represent the interests of

the city only; the sources make no mention of any Slovak national issue. While a member of the Diet, Štúr delivered a speech about a particular Slovak case only once. Instead he mostly dealt with questions of the cities and some general issues. The “urban question” was a key issue in the politics of the 1840s, as the reform-minded liberal gentry aimed to modernize the conservative political system of the cities and introduce democratic reforms in their administration. Therefore Štúr’s activity in the Diet can be understood far better as the work of a politician in the transition from feudal to liberal society than it can as the efforts of a Slovak nationalist. Another chapter of the book is devoted to a topic slightly different from the abovementioned. While the questions Demmel raised before were central to the Slovak national canon but rather marginal in Hungarian historiography, the chapter on the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 touches upon one of the most important points in both national narratives. Demmel points out some incoherent parts of the Slovak national canon, yet avoids passing judgment on Štúr and the civil war he provoked in North Hungary. The final chapters examine Štúr’s last years, in particular the position of Modor (in Slovakian Modra), the town to which he moved in 1851, and the legend of his suicide in 1856. Based on a close reading of the sources, Demmel refutes the view that Štúr lived in isolation in Modor, persecuted by the police, nor does he find any evidence of his suicide.

This relatively long description of the book’s content offers an understanding of the novelty Demmel brings to the discussion. Dissociating himself from the conceptual framework of national master narratives, Demmel provides a much more lively, colorful and plausible picture, not only of Štúr but of mid-nineteenth-century society in Hungary and thus the wider context of Slovak nationalism. Microhistory, the history of mentalities, thick description, and network analysis are Demmel’s keywords, and even though the application of these methods is not novel in the social history in the region, the investigation of a national hero using these approaches is definitely new.

The multiplicity of the applied methodology precludes the construction of a classic linear life story, yet this fragmentation opens the field for similar studies. Some important chapters of Štúr’s life did not fit into Demmel’s book, even though as subjects of study they would have been at least as challenging and probably would have yielded similarly exciting findings. For instance, Štúr’s studies in Germany completely fall out of the scope, and the evolution of his political ideas is touched upon only incidentally. Indeed Demmel was so preoccupied with the deconstruction of the Slovak and Hungarian master

narratives that he did not reflect on the recent “Western” literature on the topic, so one is a bit surprised not to see references to the works on Slovak history by Josette Baer,⁴ Tomasz Kamuszella⁵ and Alexander Maxwell.⁶

Nonetheless, Demmel’s book is unquestionably a key reading for anyone interested in the Slovak and Hungarian history of the nineteenth century. The extent to which Demmel has reached his original goal, to provide an understanding of a Slovak national hero that will be considered valid both in Hungary and Slovakia, remains a question, as neither an English nor a Slovak edition has appeared. What is sure is that Hungarian historical scholarship has overwhelmingly praised Demmel’s contribution, so half of the goal has been completed. As the Kalligram publishing house plans to translate the book into Slovak, soon it will be evident the extent to which Slovak historical scholarship is open to a reinterpretation of a central hero constructed by earlier generations that is radical both in its methodology and its narrative content.

Bálint Varga

4 Josette Baer, *Revolution, Modus Vivendi or Sovereignty? The Political Thought of the Slovak National Movement from 1861 to 1914* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2010).

5 Tomasz Kamuszella, *The Politics of Language and Nationalism in Modern Central Europe* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

6 Alexander Maxwell, *Choosing Slovakia: Slavic Hungary, the Czechoslovak Language and Accidental Nationalism* (London: Tauris Academic Series, 2009).

Maps of Remembrance. Space, Belonging and Politics of Memory in Eastern Europe. By Máté Zombory. Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2012. 311 pp.

Máté Zombory's impressive monograph examines maps of remembrance. By using the metaphor of a map of remembrance in the title, Zombory indicates the conceptual and methodological framework of his post-1989 research on Hungarian national identity. The metaphor refers to Appadurai's concept of 'scape' or 'ethnoscape' used for the study of complex cultures, their coexistence, and the characteristic differences of the respective societies.¹ However, in identity research the further consideration of the concept of lieu de mémoire introduced by Pierre Nora, which is part of the discussion in this book, has become increasingly unavoidable.² What does this mean exactly? In this regard, these are maps drawn by the memory, specifically emerging identity maps that are bound to people of Hungarian nationality and Hungarian mother tongue whose national belonging became problematic for some reason in the twentieth century.

The author structures the book around three key concepts: nationality, space and remembrance. The theoretical part of the monograph is an interpretation of these concepts. The topic indicated in the title is introduced by three theoretical and three empirical studies. The main purpose of the book is to focus on the relationship between the individual and the nation, as well as to study the national phenomenon and the role of particular states. The author examines and illustrates the spatial practices based on analyses of memory constructions.

The empirical part is mainly a representation of practices of the identity strategies used by the state and the individual. In the case of the first, the author analyzes political speeches, while in the case of the second he examines life stories using the method of oral history. The key question of the book can be summarized as follows: "The question is: what role does the representation of the space in memory play such that it produces national belonging as a natural factor?" (p.8).

1 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

2 Pierre Nora, "Entre Mémoire et Histoire. La problématique des lieux," in *La République*, ed. Pierre Nora, vol. 1 of *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), XVI–XLII.

The first chapter of the work, entitled *Nationalism and Spatiality*, concentrates on the spatial representation of nations in Eastern Europe. In this chapter Zombory observes that the world of nations is pervaded by a sort of spatial dynamism which contributes to the formation of national belonging. Zombory offers a reinterpretation of nationalism and revision of the nation's raison d'être. As he notes, "attachment to a place is not self-evident or naturally given, consequently the spatialization of (national) culture—including territorialization—is a historical, political and social process" (pp.29–30). The main aim of this chapter is to highlight, alongside the notion of the immobility of the nations, spatial movements whereby the differing problems of homeland and home arise.

In the second theoretical part of the book the author raises the issue of "spatial practices constructing belonging" connected to remembrance (p.50). At the beginning of the chapter, entitled *Between Place and Memory: the Practices of Localization*, Zombory claims that the spatial aspects rarely appear in the memory-discourses. In this section he tries to fill a lacuna. He redefines the problem of belonging. "Briefly, it is by reformulating the contexts of sites and memory according to the problematics of spatial practices" (p.52). Alongside the analyses of memory and space, Zombory presents theories related to the topic, theories that help determine the concept of spatial practices of remembrance. The author specifies this at the end of the chapter: "The spatializing practice of remembrance I examine is narration: I analyze national narratives of the past given as a reaction to spatial challenges" (p.84).³

This turn leads into the first empirical chapter of this work, *The Return to Europe: State Politics of Memory and Hungarian Belonging*. This case study offers an analysis of the Hungarian national localization procedures after 1989. The main issue of the chapter is "how the Hungarian state produced national-spatial belonging after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc" (p.9).

The author dissects the speeches at the commemorations of August 20 between the period of the political change and the accession to the European Union (the period from 1989 to 2004), narratives of the prime ministers and presidents of the Hungarian Republic related to the national history. The first part of the study provides information on the role of East-West differentiation, which is closely connected to the meaning and the significance of Hungary's

3 The author defines the concept of narration as follows: "Narration is a discursive practice which is not identical to text: the utterance has a bodily-material dimension, and the narration localizes not only in time, but also in space" (p.84).

'return to Europe'. In the introductory part of the analysis of the political speeches, Zombory plainly indicates that he is going to present ritual cartographic practices with which "Hungarian state leadership has redrawn the ideological world map that disintegrated with the collapse of the Eastern Bloc" (p.92).

The analysis of the political speeches is important for this reason: "The state localization tracing out the space for national belonging thus produces a map that creates the characteristics of the subject constructed by the commemoration, the nation – in other words, (narration) national identity" (p.93). The succeeding subchapters contain analyses of the speeches held by the official Hungarian state representatives, presidents and prime ministers on state commemorations. Zombory regards these commemorations as political rituals that are localizations, thus they reconstruct national belonging in the bodily-material dimension of past. He refers to these practices of remembrance as the national cartography, illustrating them with examples from the Hungarian state politics of memory after 1989.

The chapter *The Nation as Imaginative Laboratory* is part of the theoretical framework of the book. The author undertakes to investigate the politics of belonging. In this context, he examines the theoretical aspects of identity. Hereafter the question of the subject and the discursive relation of power comes to the fore. The author tries to explore this: "I deal with on one hand the way individual identity strategies can be examined in the context of state normalization [...]" (p.9). The discussion of the theoretical questions is followed by the remarks on the research methodology.

The next section of the work belongs to the empirical part consisting of the study *The Museum of the Self: National-Ethnic Belonging and the Memory of Expulsion*. This section analyzes the life story interviews of people who were directly involved in the forced migrations and expulsions in the twentieth century. In particular, Zombory examines the construction of national-ethnic belonging using the life stories of people of German origin who were resettled or deported to the Soviet Union. The identity strategies in this section are constructed in the context of forced relocation. Through a reconstruction of the relationship created with the past, the flashbacks create a certain 'self-musealization'.

As the author describes it: "The borders of homeland constructed by self-musealization are qualitatively equivalent to the borders of the homeland according to the territorial norm of the nation-state, but the strategic marking out of them invalidates the unquestionable unity of state and nation" (p.286).

The chapter entitled *Hungarian Homelands: National Belonging "Beyond the Border"* analyzes the life stories of Hungarians living in Slovakia. Zombory examines

the interviewees' relationships to the Hungarian state politics of memory with respect to the discourses of existence "beyond the border". In addition, he raises the question, how is it possible for Hungarians to remain Hungarians outside the borders of Hungary? The author notes in connection with the examination of national belonging that in contrast to the previous chapter he analyzes spatial displacements regarding the Trianon Treaty (1920), which was predicated on the enforcement of the territorial norm of the nation-state and was implemented without any mass movement of the population. The author summarizes the main purpose of this chapter: "The field of my examination is delimited by the conflict between Hungarians living outside the borders and the political practices of the Hungarian state in the discourse addressing them" (p.211).

To lay down the basis of the theoretical part he uses Rogers Brubaker's theoretical framework. The author concentrates on the spatial displacement that takes place in "Hungarian–Hungarian relations," giving rise to alternative homes. The participants in these relationships are individuals living in the Hungarian state and outside the Hungarian borders. The context of the analyses is given by Hungary's official diaspora politics between 1989 and 2010. In part of this chapter Zombory writes about the Hungarian state's political practices regarding the Hungarians living outside the borders, as well as individual identity strategies and the localization of the national home.

The seventh chapter is a kind of summary of the work. The author writes about the objectives and conclusions of the book. The title of this part is *State-free Nationalism, Natural National Resistance*. The question of national belonging is joined with the spatial dynamics of nationalism. So the object of the investigation is the nation state's reaction to the spatial displacements that presented a challenge to the concept of national belonging. By maintaining practices of national cartography, the official Hungarian nation-state representatives constructed a natural relationship attached to the inert homeland, portraying the homeland as a permanent, natural entity which must be protected from change.

As the author puts it: "The 'national body' materializing in this discourse is apparently not a political quality, but a natural one" (p.284). This means, furthermore, that anyone who is fashioned by the nation as a foreigner becomes an outcast.

Another important question raised by Zombory is how the outcast finds voice in the national discourse. The author examines two cases in this respect. In the first case, the displacement caused by the territorial norm of the nation-state is linked to the movement of the individual, but in the second it is not:

“The spatial dynamic makes possible the constant construction of national belonging. However the construction of non-nation-state homelands means a cultural form of the national relationship of individual and places that rejects the territorial ideal prescribed as a norm of nationalism, according to which the borders of nation and state must be congruent” (p.286). Thus, localization processes can create ‘alternative national homes’. Zombory thus questions the doctrine of nation-state nationalism. However, he also draws attention to the fact that the territorializing localization processes under examination repeat the territorial norm of the nation-state.⁴

In connection with the natural functioning of national belonging, the examples indicate that national belonging becomes natural through the spatial-material identification of present and past. On the other hand, Zombory implies how the national discourse challenges natural belonging. The author also draws attention to the fact that alongside the “social strength” of the localization practices, one has to face its physical-material nature (pp.288–89).

The most important result of the work is to explore new nationalism, spatial belonging, and the questions of remembrance. Zombory highlights the relationship between these three concepts and presents them as inseparable. Next to the nation’s static nature, he points out its dynamic movement, thereby recasting it according to a new approach. Spatial practices must be made part of the scholarship on nationalism, and in order to further our understanding of these practices, Zombory uses the memory research. He points out that past is reconstructed not only in time, but also in space.

The language of the monograph is the language of the scholar, but the registers and style are exciting and diverse. The great advantage of the monograph is that it approaches the subject from different perspectives. However, Zombory arguably attempts to adopt too many approaches. In my opinion, the processes and examples should be described in more detail and the scope of the examination of national belonging should be also widened. At the same time, in the Hungarian secondary literature Zombory’s book constitutes one of the most nuanced contributions to the new approaches to nationalism and national issues.

Ildikó Bajcsi

⁴ After all, these practices construct ethnic homelands within the nation-state territory and national homelands outside the nation-state, which however, in a manner equivalent to the nation-state ideal, are externally delimited in space, homogenized internally, and rooted in the soil (p.287).

What Made the Kádár Era? Two Books on Hungary’s Recent Past
Népuralom ötvenhatban [People’s Rule in ’56]. By Éva Ständeisky.
 Pozsony–Budapest: Kalligram–1956-os Intézet, 2010. 597 pp.
Bevezetés a kádárizmusba [Introduction to Kádárism]. By János Rainer M.
 Budapest: 1956-os Intézet–L’Harmattan Kiadó, 2011. 352 pp.

Hungary has its own extensive literature on the era of state socialism, with a steady stream of monographs (re)assessing the whole of the period. Previously well-established ideas on the state and society of state socialism have come under review in recent years. The approaches of social and cultural history and the history of mentality are gradually making inroads into the study of recent history in this country. The assessment of the Kádár era has become a question of heightened interest in the last few years. The limits of power, the scope ordinary people had for action (including against the system) and how these shaped the world and everyday life of state socialism are among the fundamental questions of interest on the state socialist system and the Kádár era.

No assessment of the Kádár era can completely dissociate it from 1956 and the period that preceded it, the Stalinist Rákosi era. Books on the events of the 1956 Revolution have proliferated in Hungary since the political transition. Éva Ständeisky’s *Népuralom ötvenhatban* stands out among these. The author examines the aims that motivated the everyday participants in 1956 and the individual and collective actions which shaped the historical events. She takes a history-of-mentality approach to the events of the Revolution, assembling and interpreting data that has already been published, and focusing on individual cases and local events. Although to a large extent building on previous political-history and local-history treatments, the book examines the mentalities in the background of the events from close up. The scale changes several times from chapter to chapter, progressing from the mass to the group and then to the individual, and giving an insight into the Revolution from a micro-history perspective. These changes in viewpoint in themselves set the book apart from the idealized accounts of the Revolution familiar in general history books and from the image of 1956 constructed in the West.

Foreign accounts of the Revolution were heavily influenced by the work of Hannah Arendt. In the second edition of her book on totalitarianism, Arendt wrote about the workers’ councils set up in the Hungarian Revolution. These have been widely interpreted in Western left-wing accounts as repositories of the

revolutionary will (the aims of the “working class”). Several, following Arendt,⁵ described Hungary’s Revolution as a workers’ revolution against a totalitarian regime which called itself a workers’ state. Bill Lomax directly described the Hungarian revolutionary workers’ organizations as a self-administering state of workers’ councils.⁶

By contrast, Standeisky shows the diversity of organizations which sprang up (revolutionary committees, national committees, national councils, workers’ councils, etc.). She sees the collapse of the dictatorial regime as a state of grace that gave people the chance to produce truly democratic arrangements, setting up new organizations at a local level and at their own initiative. She argues that direct democracy (or more precisely various spontaneous forms of that) can truly work in extraordinary circumstances, because of the special ability of ordinary people to create a meaningful and workable order—at least temporarily. This, in the interpretation given in the book, is what happened in Hungary in 1956. At one point, she says of the achievements of ordinary people: “they put the world that had fallen apart during the Rákosi dictatorship back together: they created real people’s power, and order” (p.272).

Despite being based on a selection of individual events, the account of the Revolution is not overly idealized or one-sided, because it makes the diversity of these events very clear, and presents some less-known features of the Revolution, such as manifestations of anti-Semitism and lynchings. Hannah Arendt claimed in her classic work that there was almost no robbery or looting in 1956, i.e. mob rule did not take hold. Relying on published sources, Standeisky presents some of the more carnival-like moments of the Revolution. She shows that revolutionary and workers’ councils did not form immediately, and all kinds of things happened from day to day. It is not easy to confront or convey the dark side of 1956 in Hungary. As recently as 2006, a play written by András Papp and János Térey for the fiftieth anniversary raised a storm of controversy.⁷ *Kazamaták* is the stage “adaptation” of a notorious historical event, the siege of a Communist Party headquarters building in Köztársaság Square. It confronted informed public opinion with a different face of the 1956. The rebels besieged

and occupied the building of the Budapest Party Committee on 30 October 1956 and killed 24 people. Among the dead was the Communist leader Imre Mező, a supporter of Imre Nagy. Standeisky distances herself from those who see that event as a “people’s judgement”, and describes such phenomena as “the inflamed mass brutally taking out its anger—a lynching” (p.53). Occasionally, even myth-busting stories turn out not to displace the myths so neatly. Éva Tulipán’s recent book, which treats the events of Köztársaság Square in great detail, tells us that one reason for the siege of the party building may have been that the Communist Party was actually trying to organize security there. The security forces inside had clashed with the rebels several times in the days leading up to the siege, and the defenders of the building used firearms for the first time on 30 October.⁸ Thus a variety of assessments and judgements are possible for every individual and collective action, not just the larger events.

Retrospective social awareness has conditioned us to see the Revolution as a fight between good and bad, and Papp and Térey’s play was the first since the political transition to confront a wide public with how complex the events of the Revolution actually were. The idea that “goodies” can sometimes behave badly is somewhat jarring. The closing line of the play, “The single story disintegrates/ Into one thousand, nine hundred and fifty-six pieces” is a wry pun: the word for “piece” in Hungarian also means “stage play”. Returning to Standeisky’s book, we read that every individual and group action has its own special driving force, behind which we can recognize the general characteristics of human nature. These driving forces, from the evidence of this book, seem to be autonomy and love of freedom. This hardly differs from Hannah Arendt’s insight that the antidote to totalitarianism is spontaneity, the capability of autonomous action, which totalitarian systems try to eliminate, but exists in everybody. But here, individual and community autonomy takes its meaning in democracy, and not within the Marxist ideal of revolution.

Standeisky’s book seems to tell us that in the individual and group actions behind the events of 1956, the force which stood in opposition to dictatorship and everything associated with it was the freedom-seeking spirit inherent in modern society. (The Western treatments quoted assessed the totalitarian system against Marxist ideals, whereas here the moral gauge, or rather the counterpoint, is democracy, which the author claims showed up in 1956 as the alternative to

5 Hannah Arendt, “Epilogue: Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution” in idem, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 480–510.

6 Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1976); Bill Lomax, ed., *Hungarian Workers’ Councils in 1956* (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 1990). For the latest criticism of this view, see Mark Pittaway, *The Workers’ State: Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary, 1944–1958* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 230–56.

7 András Papp and János Térey, “*Kazamaták*,” *Holmi* 18, no. 3 (2006): 292–383.

8 Éva Tulipán, *Szigorúan ellenőrzött emlékezet. A Köztársaság téri ostrom 1956-ban* [Closely Observed Memory. The Köztársaság Square Siege in 1956] (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 2012).

dictatorship). This is definitely true if the research approaches the events of 1956 from the perspective of democratic values. In modern times, according to Hannah Arendt, we can give meaning to our own time by regaining the past. The pearl diver does not dive to the bottom of the sea to discover everything that is there; he is only interested in pearls and coral.⁹ This applies even if she sets out to present nearly every phenomenon, including those less important for her own interpretation.

According to Arendt's theory of totalitarianism, terror is a phenomenon that pervades every aspect of social life. In this interpretation, terror is actually the trigger of social resistance and revolution (true also for 1956). The question remains of how to explain how a totalitarian system can survive for a long time, i.e. why it does not prompt members of society to form groups for collective action.¹⁰ This, or how the totalitarian system built itself into the everyday world, is really the central question of the historiography of the Kádár era.

The nature and operation of Kádárism, the new order which was set up in Hungary to stifle the democratic initiatives of 1956, is the subject of the book by János Rainer M. The essays making up *Bevezetés a kádárizmusba* extend their scope to the preceding Rákosi era and the subsequent political transition. Rainer claims that Stalinism and the Rákosi era did not break down every social tradition in Hungary, and the Kádár era made fewer changes to the Stalinist system after 1956 than contemporary discourses might lead us to think. The center of the author's interest, as implied by the title, is the assessment and interpretation of the Kádár era and Kádárism.

The book reflects on the best-known foreign interpretations of the state socialist system, theories of totalitarianism, various schools of revisionism, and interpretations of Stalinism as a civilization. Rainer notes that "the paradigm of 'totalitarianism' was to no small extent reborn in Eastern Europe before and after 1989" (p.125). It is difficult, however, to judge the validity of theory from what are often purely ideological applications of it; the oversimplifying interpretations are usually what the revisionists turn against (p.49). In Hungary, the totalitarianism paradigm is usually taken up together with right-wing, highly

ideologized anti-Communist rhetoric. Nowadays, however, we see these systems as being as open to left-wing criticism (indeed in a democracy they can only be approached critically) as Western capitalism, and even some elements of totalitarianism theory fit into this criticism. The author, in the restrained tones of these essays, implies that he finds the best route to interpreting the Kádár era through methodological multiplicity and a combination of approaches, and that is what he tries to do in this book.

For a long time, the "Kádár system" appeared in both Western and Hungarian historiography as a version of state socialism with a special human face, approaching Western welfare states, a system which made Central and Eastern European totalitarianism liveable, and in fact fundamentally changed it (taming the system from arbitrary and totalitarian to merely authoritarian). Rainer claims that Kádárism was not a system in its own right, but only a shift within the system. These internal changes did, however, combine into some kind of organic whole which might be called Kádárism, a liveable system for a large proportion of ordinary people. The author argues that Kádárism was not as different from the previous era as the contemporary discourses legitimating the rule of János Kádár, and hence today's discourses, would have it. It is striking, for example, that the word "reform", regarded in both Hungary and abroad as a uniquely applicable to the system, was almost never used in a positive sense by Kádár himself (p.185–86).

In analyzing the essence of Kádárism, Rainer mentions a "Kádárist feeling" (p.146). He claims this derived not only from the sure knowledge that the country was "the best of existing worlds", but also from the sense that everything could get worse (and only worse) at any time. He uses this as the general explanation for how the new regime managed to consolidate after the bloody reprisals. The author highlights the eponymous leader's cynicism (p.27), which was perhaps not so much cynicism as the—not necessarily always conscious—recognition of public expectations, the day-to-day bounds of dictatorship and the limitations of rule. The author characterizes Kádár, who openly distanced himself from his predecessors, as not being associated with personal cult (p.200–14). He implies that the party leader's behavior also contributed to the consolidation of the state system after its violent restoration. The question remains, however, as to how much this consolidation was directed from above and how much it derived from the will and deliberate action of a leader who seemed (and presented himself as) different from the other state-socialist leaders. In the revisionist approach, this could much better be interpreted as a jointly-developed social practice to

9 "Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths, and to carry them to the surface, this thinking delves into the depths of the past—but not in order to resuscitate it the way it was and to contribute to the renewal of extinct ages." Hannah Arendt, "Introduction," in idem, ed., *Illuminations, essays by Walter Benjamin* (New York: Schocken, 1969), 50–51.

10 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 498.

which the First Secretary adapted than as a compromise between “regime” and “society”.

Individuals do not simply subordinate themselves to state power in a dictatorship, but by their actions they accept, transform and—in their own everyday worlds—even create it. State power to some extent depends on the character and actions of its citizens/subjects. It follows from the work of revisionist historians who adopt Foucault’s concepts of power that we can get close to understanding the system via the collective and individual actions which enable it to operate. Stephen Kotkin claims that “Stalinism was not just a political system, let alone the rule of an individual. It was a set of values, a social identity, a way of life. When it comes to Stalinism, what needs to be explained and subjected to detailed scrutiny are the mechanisms by which the dreams of ordinary people and those of the individuals directing the state found common ground in this Soviet version of the welfare state.”¹¹ The same might be said of totalitarianism in general, and the approach does not actually contradict the essential claims of totalitarianism theories (which link the substance of dictatorship to modern forms of violence) but examines the everyday implementation of totalitarianism and seeks the explanation of the sustained existence of totalitarian systems in the world of everyday life.

What ordinary people actually got from Kádárism, and what compromises or everyday practices confirmed the system’s legitimacy in the Kádár era, are fundamental questions. The discourses of the period hold that the system, starting in the 1960s, created rising standards of living and relative welfare in Hungary (Rainer also mentions the complex relationship between these discourses and everyday realities). Recent research, however (books by Béla Tomka and Sándor Horváth) largely refute this.¹² This work no longer looks to the other countries of the Soviet system for a basis of comparison but to Western democratic social policy, whose fundamental aims diverged from those the social system built up in Hungary after 1956. Hungarian social policy was aimed at legitimizing state institutions, the state, and even the social system itself. It was a system which

gave no opening for real representation of interests, and especially not public collective representation.

According to Kotkin, what emerged under state socialist regimes was an “uncivil society”. The establishment was the only formation which was a real organized unit (set against unorganized groupings).¹³ The contemporary elite and bureaucracy, through their organization and their positions within society, thus arranged the systems of distribution to operate according to their interests. The uncivil logic, i.e. the lack of autonomy and solidarity and the imposition of narrow interests ran through not only the old establishment (i.e. top down) but society as a whole (nearly everybody had something to lose). The paternalist policy ultimately proved successful because—until the nineteen eighties—neither the social injustices nor any other cause triggered mass protests.¹⁴

Rainer’s book gives us a much more textured account of the Kádár era and the operation of the state socialist system in general than previous approaches, which confined themselves to political history. It challenges the assertions that the Kádár era can be sharply delineated from the Rákosi era and that the system’s internal changes during the period directly led to the political transition. This may encourage us to examine the state socialist system in Hungary as a separate civilization and its operation according to its own rules. If we give up the notion of all-embracing total power, we also have to reject the idea that dictatorship was driven initially purely by violence and later by compromises offered by the regime. Nonetheless, we are left with the question of why the society that was the champion of freedom in 1956 (in its own and the world’s eyes) uniformly accepted—or seemed to accept—the framework and existence of the state socialist system. Viewed from close up, how can we explain the phenomenon Rainer calls the “Kádárist feeling”?

Today, it seems that consolidating state socialism, after the feeling of permanent threat and vulnerability of the period of catastrophe and the Rákosi era, created a kind of peaceful opportunism in Hungary. After 1956, the unalterability of the system (and the need for collaboration/cooperation with the regime) did indeed seem to become a general awareness, or almost a shared attitude to life. A basic question in this regard is whether individual and collective anger against the system existed or could have existed in the Kádár era, and if so, in what form. Another question is how these behaviors relate to the

11 Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 23.

12 Béla Tomka, *Welfare in East and West: The Hungarian Welfare State in an International Comparison, 1918–1990* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003). Béla Tomka: *Szociálpolitika a 20. századi Magyarországon európai perspektívában* [Social Policy in Twentieth-Century Hungary in a European Perspective] (Budapest: Századvég, 2003); Sándor Horváth, *Két emelet boldogság. Mindennapi szociálpolitika Budapesten a Kádár-korban* [Happiness on Two Storeys. Everyday Social Policy in Budapest in the Kádár Era] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2012).

13 Stephen Kotkin (with a contribution by Jan T. Gross), *Uncivil Society. 1989 and the Implosion of the Communist Establishment* (New York: Modern Library, 2009).

14 Horváth, *Két emelet boldogság*, 242.

individual and collective behaviors seen in 1956. In my view, two social science concepts could be adapted to interpret the formation and everyday working of Kádárism, and they cannot be understood solely by the theoretical models of totalitarianism.

German historians of everyday life developed a highly influential theory to describe the legitimacy of dictatorships and the effect and significance of individual actions in these regimes. This theory borrows from German literature and philosophy the concept of *Eigensinn* (“sense of one’s own interests”) to describe the behavior and motivations of the “majority”, i.e. people who were neither enthusiastic disciples nor active opponents of the Nazi or Soviet dictatorships but whose everyday work and passive behavior, by not presenting resistance, helped these systems to build up and endure. The word implies a kind of self-sufficiency and independence; not the free will of free persons, but the will of citizens who can (and do) adapt to various kinds of regime while keeping their own direct interests in view.¹⁵ Set against this is the concept of autonomy, the kind of everyday behavior which inhibits the emergence and persistence of totalitarianism and which should, in principle, be typical behavior in a democracy. Whether it is democracy which creates autonomous behavior, and dictatorship which creates *Eigensinn* and everyday forms of collaboration, or these things happen the other way round, is a complex question, and the perspective of study obviously has a bearing on the answer.

The social sciences, following Nietzsche,¹⁶ use the term *ressentiment* to denote the impotent vengeance and collective passions aroused in ordinary people by

15 On the *Eigensinn* concept, see Alf Lüdtkke, “Geschichte und ‘Eigensinn’” in *Alltagskultur, Subjektivität und Geschichte. Zur Theorie und Praxis von Alltagsgeschichte*, ed. Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt (Münster: Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt, 1994), 139–53.

16 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1969). The historical adaptations of the concept: Robert C. Solomon explains the English expression *resentment* as always being directed to people of higher rank, anger to those of the same rank, and contempt to those of lower rank. Robert Solomon, “One Hundred Years of Ressentiment: Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals,” in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals*, ed. Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 95–126. In one of Sheila Fitzpatrick’s essays, following Arno Mayers’ study of revolutionary violence—Arno Mayers, *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001)—she analyzes the role of vengeance and *ressentiment* in the Russian Revolution, by which she means the four decades of Soviet history following 1917. This ascribes the main driving force of the series of events labelled “the revolution to the resentment of everyday people. The collective anger of the mass was directed at the bourgeois elites at the beginning of the revolution, the Russian intellectuals in the late 1920s, the Communist administrative elite (or bureaucracy) by the late 1930s, and the Jews by the late 1940s and early 1950s. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Vengeance and Ressentiment in the Russian Revolution,” *French Historical Studies* 24 (2001): 579–88.

unjustly inflicted injuries and expressed in terms of justice or their own sense of “right”. This is violently suppressed resistance, the post-terror condition, the forced renunciation of resistance. At such times, ordinary people—having no defeatable opponent or space for real action—become incapable of resistance. The actions of individuals thus serve purely their own personal interests and act against, and restrict, each other. Today, we do not look back on these individual and collective authoritative behaviors as revealing aspects of the past or points of reference (going back to the pearl-diver metaphor: as pearls or coral), but they may nonetheless have been important driving forces behind the events.

In the Kádár era, the majority were not true disciples of the dictatorship, but neither were they its opponents. As simple citizens, they adapted to it because they were concerned with their own interests. These were the behaviors that may have created “Kádárism” in everyday life. It was in the basic interests of the new regime that the party leadership not be the target of suppressed or repressed resentments, and that people should seek the enemy in invisible forces or external, occupying powers. Nearly every symbolic act of the era’s eponym (who retained a long grip on power) was directed at having the truly suppressed groups of society see him as a man of *ressentiment*, someone who really was no different from them, the ordinary people, and who represented their interests.¹⁷ Totalitarian systems have given rise to innumerable forms of collaboration, and the concepts of terror and resistance in themselves are insufficient to explain them, in Hungary as elsewhere. What made the Kádár era? Very briefly, a social need for it in the prevailing conditions of dictatorship; this is one of the uncomfortable lessons of studying “Kádárism”.

Translated by Alan Campbell

György Majtényi

17 An adaptation of the concept of *ressentiment* to the Kádár era: György Majtényi, *Vezérsel. Kádár János mindennapjai* [Queen’s Gambit. The Everyday Life of János Kádár] (Budapest: Libri Kiadó–Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, 2012).

Iron Curtain. The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944–1956. By Anne Applebaum. New York: Doubleday, 2012. xxxvi + 566 pp.

In 1983, during the Cold War, Milan Kundera coined a new definition of Central Europe as *Un occident kidnappé*—“the kidnapped West.”¹ To the present day, his essay has remained an important contribution to studies of the mental mapping of Europe. This is due to his partly very emotional appeal to regard his Czech homeland as well as Poland and Hungary as a part of a western cultural sphere that is “under the Russian yoke” but nonetheless still belongs to the West. His article, published in the western press, was meant to draw attention to the lands inside the Iron Curtain and to show that they are not a homogeneous and gray *terra incognita*, but rather have a rich and variegated history and culture of their own.

Thirty years later, a study has appeared that describes and analyzes the act of “kidnapping” or “crushing” of Eastern Europe: *The Iron Curtain* by Anne Applebaum. The American historian and journalist, who is well known for her Pulitzer Prize winning study of the Gulag,² spent six years collecting archival materials and personal memories of contemporary witnesses. The result is impressive. The author manages not only to tell in clear words the general history of the region after the war,³ but also to convey this history through the individual stories of ordinary people. Since the postwar generation is passing away, Applebaum’s efforts can hardly be overestimated. She conducted a series of interviews in Hungary, Germany, and Poland, and studied the archives of secret police and government organizations. The book is very well researched and I have been able to discover only one factual error: Ivan Maiskii was never a foreign minister of the Soviet Union (Applebaum claims he was, p. XXVIII).

The author begins with the story of how the new socialist regimes were established in Poland, East Germany and Hungary, where socialism *à la* Moscow was experienced as foreign, if not downright hostile rule. According to Applebaum, one of the main reasons why the new rule of liberators could be

established in these countries was because the postwar suffering and distress of the people there caused them to yearn for “normality.”

The imposition of Soviet priorities and Soviet thinking on all three countries (which had gone through a rather nationalistic period in the 1930’s) presented a considerable challenge to the Soviet rulers.⁴ The difficulty of this task was in turn responsible for the rather undemocratic, violent methods of its imposition, such as making the “Moscow Communists” Mátyás Rákosi, Boleslaw Bierut, and Walter Ulbricht top leaders and carrying out acts of political repression in preparation for “elections.” Although Soviet influence was carefully camouflaged, Applebaum manages to reconstruct the mechanisms of how the Soviet Union went about ruling and exerting political and social control in the satellite countries of Eastern Europe.

Applebaum chose the geographic frame of the study not so much to make comparisons between three countries, but to show the common mechanisms involved in how Soviet power was introduced and how interactions between Moscow and the politicians of Warsaw, Budapest and East Berlin took place. She makes clear, too, that there were other institutions throughout Eastern Europe that followed similar patterns: she describes the “class work” of Soviet-taught secret agents (p.68), the Soviet-style organization of loyal youth from kindergartens (p.151–73), and the total control exerted over mass media, where “soviet equipment, soviet transmitters, soviet advisers, [and the] soviet worldview” (p.181) were employed, as well as the construction of socialist cities such as Sztálinvaros, Stalinstadt and Nowa Huta, which were built in Soviet fashion like the Russian Magnitogorsk had been built in the 1930s. However, Applebaum also describes the differences peculiar to each of the regions. There were opponent players as well, such as the Catholic Church in Poland or the *Petőfi Circle* in Hungary. In the case of Poland, the ruling party officially tolerated regime opponents. The most moving example is that of Boleslaw Piasecki, who turned from the extreme right to the extreme left. As a former member of the Home Army, he wasn’t punished by the regime, as were most of his comrades, and he was even able to found *Pax* in 1952 as a paradoxically loyal opposition Catholic Party (p.408). These kinds of “deviations” would have been impossible to imagine in Soviet Russia during the Stalinist era. It is therefore legitimate to ask if we can speak of political and social life in Eastern Europe in terms

1 Kundera Milan, “Un occident kidnappé” ou la tragédie de l’Europe centrale,” *Le Débat* 27, no. 5 (1983): 3–23.

2 Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: a History* (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

3 There have been many studies devoted to the particular regions, but no study that takes up the challenge of providing a broader, more general perspective (p. XXXIV).

4 The mental dispositions of the societies had been affected by the nationalist or even fascist values of the postwar societies of Eastern Europe. Applebaum mentions this example by referring to anti-Jewish pogroms in Poland and Hungary (p.138–39).

of totalitarianism, the conceptual approach that Applebaum uses in telling her story.

Applebaum claims to “gain an understanding of real totalitarianism—not totalitarianism in theory, but totalitarianism in practice, and how it shaped lives of millions of Europeans.” (p.XXXVI). This is a crucial feature of Applebaum’s study: for her, the conception of totalitarianism is a “useful and necessary empirical description” (p.XXIV) of postwar Eastern Europe. In her study, the understanding of the totalitarian state is that of a regime that aspires to total control: due to this, she uses the term *totalitarian* to analyze methods and techniques of total control that were exported from the Soviet Union after the war (p.XXIII–XXIV). According to the classic totalitarian school of the 1950s,⁵ the totalitarianism model means excluding society and people from the analysis. The main topic of Applebaum’s book is—quite the contrary—precisely the role personality played in the postwar socialist systems: she describes her book as being about “how ordinary people learned to cope with the new regimes, how they collaborated, how and why they joined a party, how they resisted, actively or passively [...]” (p.XXXVI). The use of a totalitarian model is problematic even in the case of Soviet Russia,⁶ and even more so in Central Europe—it should more properly be used to describe ideology. Regarding this period of history in Central Europe, it would be more precise to speak of authoritarian dictatorships rather than totalitarian societies. Apart from this theoretical problem, Anne Applebaum’s study nonetheless remains an intelligently conceived work containing an encyclopedic wealth of details, and it is written with considerable empathy for those who lived through the period in question.

Applebaum levies a harsh verdict regarding the attitude of “ordinary people” towards the Soviet mentality: “human beings don’t acquire ‘totalitarian personalities’ with such ease.” (p.461). Her explanation of why “ordinary people coped with the new regime” is that they depended on the state and their “circumstances were not dramatic.” (p.393). In this way, Applebaum raises a core question for historians and social-anthropologists, but also for those who lived through the period: did ordinary people really live “double lives” and become

5 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958); Zbigniew Brzezinski and Carl Joachim Friedrich, “Die allgemeinen Merkmale der totalitären Diktatur,” in *Wege der Totalitarismus-Forschung*, ed. Bruno Seidel and Siegfried Jenker (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974), 600–17.

6 See the discussion by Stefan Plaggenborg, “Die wichtigsten Herangehensweisen an Stalinismus in der westlichen Forschung,” in *Stalinismus. Neue Forschungen und Konzepte*, ed. Stefan Plaggenborg (Berlin: Berlin-Verlag Spitz, 1998), 13–33.

adjusted to a double way of thinking? Or did they adopt the rules of thinking and speaking, the rules of Foucauldian discourse? The answer is left to the reader.

The author gives us examples of people who consciously adopted the discourse of socialist reality. One woman says of the Party Song, “that song, ‘the party, the party,’—we thought it was really the truth, and we behaved that way.” (p.387). Here Applebaum departs from totalitarianism as a theory and seems to share some of the views of revisionists regarding the “rapid social mobility” (p.392) that brought the possibility of social promotion for many young workers.⁷

One of the recurring themes in Applebaum’s study is the way violence was used to establish loyal societies. Despite the large-scale expulsion of local populations from almost all regions of Eastern Europe (multiple migrations) and politically motivated purges, governments went about establishing Soviet-style camps, often at the sites of former Nazi concentration camps. According to the author, the aim of the Soviet camps was to frighten people and to prevent dissent, and not to punish (p.108). This point must be regarded critically. First, conditions in the Soviet Gulag were much more inhumane than they were in the German postwar camps. Applebaum’s source, Wolfgang Lehman, maintains that the opposite was true (p.105), but as we know, human memory is not reliable. Second, the people in the *Speziallager* were not necessarily innocent: some of them had taken part in the mass murder programs of the Third Reich as lawyers or doctors, and many of them returned to their civilian professions after imprisonment, which lasted a number of years.⁸ Denazification is of course not the topic of Applebaum’s study, but this should have been mentioned in order to make her discussion more nuanced.

In the book one rarely finds the stories of convinced Communists, apart from the top leaders of the Communist Party, such as Bierut, Rákosi and Ulbricht. For some of them love and loyalty to Stalin was fatal: Bierut died of a stroke or

7 Cf. in particular, Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union 1921–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); idem, “New Perspectives on Stalinism,” *Russian Review* 45 (1986): 357–83; as well as Moshe Lewin, *Russian Peasants and Soviet Power: a study of collectivization* (New York: Norton, 1975 [1968]).

8 Cf. Bettina Greiner, “Der Preis der Anerkennung. Zur Debatte über den Erinnerungsort der Speziallager,” in *Instrumentalisierung, Verdrängung, Aufarbeitung. Die sowjetischen Speziallager in der gesellschaftlichen Wahrnehmung 1945 bis heute*, ed. Petra Hausstein, Annette Kaminski, Volkhard Knigge, and Bodo Ritscher (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), 114–32; Petra Hausstein, “Geschichte im Dissens. Die Auseinandersetzungen um die Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen nach dem Ende der DDR,” in *Instrumentalisierung, Verdrängung, Aufarbeitung*, ed. Hausstein et. al., 133–48.

a heart attack after he heard Khrushchev's destalinization-speech, while Rákosi was "rescued" by Moscow in the aftermath of the Hungarian Uprising and banned to Kyrgyzstan, from where he never returned to his homeland.

However, Applebaum describes a very striking phenomenon in the circles of the intellectual elite: some of them tried to "transform" themselves into "New Men." One such example was Max Lingner, the artist and painter of the mural *Aufbau der Republik*, the man who "wanted to conform [...] and went through a kind of psychological transformation." (p.342). His story seems to be typical of those who had sympathies for communism but despaired at the permanent feeling that the state had total control over the artist's work (while working on the mural Lingner was publically criticized by Otto Grotewohl, the prime minister of East Germany).⁹ Nonetheless, Lingner tried to "transform" himself into the New Man who is a "thinking and acting Bolshevik" by engaging in the practices of self-criticism and self-discipline.¹⁰ This point is remarkable because it demonstrates how people outside the borders of Soviet Russia, using the same practices of "soviet subjectivization" as the Russians, learned to "speak Bolshevik."¹¹

All over Eastern Europe there were well-known, talented artists who praised Stalin: Wisława Szymborska in Poland, Salomea Neris in Lithuania, Konstantin Simonow in Russia and many others. Some of them were later ashamed of this and deleted these poems from their anthologies, some remained proud of it. Just what motivated them to do so remains a fascinating question.

Applebaum's study also touches on the important topic of the memory of the socialist period. Applebaum's sources not only demonstrate that people were often uncritical regarding the past, as indicated by the fact that they reproduced the official rules in their recollections, but that they even cherished feelings of nostalgia:

Julia Kollár remembers her stint at the construction site of Sztálinváros as "a happy time." In addition, the author describes a phenomenon that almost

⁹ "The painter had not understood the importance of industry to the development of socialism [...]" (p.341).

¹⁰ As has been described by researchers of Soviet subjectivity, see Jochen Hellbeck, "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The diary of Stefan Podlubny (1931–1939)," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 44, no. 3 (1996): 344–73; Idem, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹¹ Cf. Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain, Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Oleg Kharkhordin, *Obličat' i licemerit'. Genealogija rossijskoj ličnosti* [Expose and Hypocrisy. Genealogy of Russian Identity] (Saint Petersburg: Evropejskij universitet v Sankt-Peterburge, 2002).

all researchers of communicative memory encounter: that the people who experience injustice and pain at the hands of a system avoid talking about these topics because they were taboo not only in public, but also in the private, family sphere. One such case is that of Elisabeth Brüning, who insisted at first that she didn't know about the violence perpetrated by Red Army soldiers, but after some time told the author what she had really experienced. This demonstrates clearly how traumatized people attempted to erase traumatic memories by forgetting, a strategy that has been described well by Aleida Assmann and Paul Ricoeur.¹²

Applebaum's book is structured around contrasts highlighting the discrepancy between propaganda and reality: the erection of "ideal socialist cities" at the industrial sites of Stalinstadt, Sztálinváros, Nowa Huta and the realities of alcohol abuse, venereal disease, political apathy and catastrophic housing; the drive to exceed quotas by using shock workers and the low quality of the production and the economic harm that ensues (p.319); the propagation of literacy and the massive emigration of many specialists to the West because of their unwillingness to take responsibility for teaching false ideals to their children (p.308).

Applebaum tells the story of socialist rule in Eastern Europe as *a story of failure*. The resistance to the system, the unwillingness to "live within a lie" (Václav Havel) resulted not only in such more or less harmless forms of opposition as wearing "jampi" [dandy]- shoes¹³ or telling political jokes, but also in tragic ones, as for example exile for the East Germans or suicide (see, for example, the moving story of the Hungarian psychoanalyst Lili Hajdú Gimesné (Lily Haidu-Gimes in Applebaum's book) (p.394–96).

The socialist "brave new world" did not collapse until 1989, but the seeds for this collapse had already been planted in the crushing of Eastern Europe—a process that was violent, inhuman and full of failures. Applebaum's study documents the extent of this failure in a clear and compelling way.

Ekaterina Makhotina

¹² Cf. Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (Munich: Beck, 2006), 218; Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Seuil, 2000).

¹³ This form of protest through fashion was used to demonstrate unwillingness to conform to totalitarian reality. In Hungary this meant wearing shoes that resembled American sneakers (*jampac* shoes), in Poland there were *bikiniarze*, and the juvenile subculture in East Germany had so-called *Halbstarke*.

The Workers' State: Industrial Labor and the Making of Socialist Hungary, 1944–1958. By Mark Pittaway. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012. ix + 386 pp.

Who dares to say that the emperor has no clothes, and if you do, what consequences can you expect? How does a system craft legitimacy, and where are the limits of power? How did the Communist Party in Hungary manage to win, in addition to the support of Soviet tanks, the support of a significant proportion of the Hungarian population, without actually having to use force in every case? How did they manage to convince people of the myth that the Communists were building the best of all possible worlds, the workers' state, and how did they shatter this very myth? Mark Pittaway, a historian who staked out his place in Hungarian and international historiography as a legal scholar dealing first and foremost with the working class of the socialist era (and who died tragically young), seeks answers to these important questions.

The posthumously published monograph by Mark Pittaway (1971–2010)¹ is the result of fifteen years of research. I first met Pittaway in 1995 in the Trade Union Archives in Rózsa Street, Budapest. He was sitting behind a wall of boxes containing documents and studying innumerable piles of dusty papers. After having completed his bachelor's thesis on Venice at the time of the Renaissance, he entered the doctoral program at the University of Liverpool, where he pursued an interest in the history of the working class in Hungary. For many people working in or around the archives in the Hungarian countryside, this Englishman was something of an exotic rarity. He was one of the few non-Hungarian historians who learned Hungarian to a high degree of proficiency and, after having read the relevant Hungarian secondary literature, did original research in archives very far from the beaten track. His monograph is based on a remarkable wealth of sources and his pioneering manner of approaching the subject does a great deal to compensate for methodological lacunae in the secondary literature. But his contribution is valuable first and foremost because of the model he adopts, which rejects the totalitarian paradigm (which has become so prevalent in contemporary historiography), a model he was among

the first to introduce with his narrative of the history of the Hungarian working class in 1944–1958.

The essence of this model lies in the fact that the totalitarian state, which in general is depicted as omnipresent and omnipotent, is merely one of the agents of history, and one the tools of which are in fact surprisingly limited. From the perspective of legitimacy, the attendants of the system (ranging from the secretary general to the average party member) influenced the prevailing attitudes towards the state (whether it wins acceptance or not) no more than the masses who, in the totalitarian paradigm, are depicted—misleadingly—as powerless and oppressed. In Pittaway's narrative the process of the creation of the socialist state is one of the most important questions, and it is closely intertwined with the question of how the authorities prompted or persuaded Hungarian society to accept the new rules on which the system rested.

The question of the treatment of the working class became one of the most important elements of the legitimacy of the Communist Party after World War II, very much like the use of nationalist rhetoric.² Pittaway considers it important to note that the socialist system itself never gained legitimacy (p.4). Yet many of the motifs of the creation of the socialist state were accepted, and they gave some legitimacy to a system that used force. Furthermore, the possibility of the use of force became a norm in many cases. In other words while the socialist regime was not necessarily seen as legitimate, neither was it seen as diabolically evil by many, however unpleasant this may be to admit in hindsight.

The monograph cautiously (sometimes overcautiously) guides the reader through the story of the creation by Communist politicians who enjoyed minimal support of a party of the masses that had palpable support among workers, to the detriment of the Social Democratic Party. And later, as a dramatic continuation of the story, the same politicians rapidly lost this support on the national and local levels when they began to create the "workers' state" (to which Pittaway refers ironically in his title) by introducing "the building of the socialist system," the "rationalization" of production, and the system of quotas. After 1956, in the new social climate, the regime under the leadership of János Kádár was again compelled to use tools to win legitimacy, since it was not possible to work and wield power in everyday life with minimal support in the shadow of tanks or at

¹ The book was already in preparation at the time of Pittaway's death. The final revisions and editing, without which it could not have been published, were done by Nigel Swain.

² Cf. Martin Mevius, *Agents of Moscow: the Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism, 1941–1953* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

“gun point.”³ In contrast, according to the totalitarian paradigm, the state used, first and foremost, force to exert its power over workers in heavy industry. In 1956 Hungarian society (especially the workers) rose up against the regime, and this was met with new repressive measures.⁴ The totalitarian paradigm suggests, inaccurately, that no one in the large industrial cities voted for the Communists of his or her own volition in 1945 and 1947 and that no one was in fact a party member. It suggests that the Communist idiom was used by members of society only as a response to the orders of the regime and only by people who sought in ever larger numbers to promote their own individual interests.

Pittaway’s approach is refreshing not only because of its novelty in comparison with the totalitarian paradigm, but also because it sheds light (on the national and local level) on the process whereby the Communist Party managed, through the use of populist rhetoric, to gain credibility and then to lose it entirely. The new system after 1956 owed its relative stability not only to the Soviet tanks, but also the “subjects” who as agents of history themselves influenced the rules of the game in everyday life. It is particularly worthwhile to emphasize the interpretation of 1956 according to which, from the perspective of the politicians involved, the Revolution can be seen as an attempt to gain legitimacy, and not simply as an uprising. From this perspective the motives and the roles played by Communist politicians in 1956 are more comprehensible, as are the functions of the workers’ councils as negotiators in the course of the reprisals and the consolidation of the Kádár system. In this story, the workers’ councils were not bastions of a self-organized revolutionary force that was realizing self-government among workers,⁵ but rather the vehicles of an attempt to further the legitimacy of the Kádár regime, an attempt initiated both from above and below. Thus they offer a perspective from which to discern the consolidation of the Kádár system not simply from below, but also from the viewpoint of the negotiations and compromises that were made at the local level. In Pittaway’s

narrative, they have a similar function to the trade union committees of 1945: their stories shed light on how the new system was able to win acceptance on the shop floor. In this interpretation, the trade union committees and the workers’ councils did not represent “union democracy” or “workers’ self-government.” Rather, the Communists used them to promote acceptance of their goals among workers in heavy industry in 1945 and the fall of 1956.

There is a long tradition of historical and sociological scholarship on workers in heavy industry in Hungary.⁶ Though the subject has not been given much attention among scholars since the change of regimes in 1989, over the course of the last decade more and more historians have begun to study it in part because of the influence of Pittaway’s contribution.⁷ His was not the first such study to examine the endeavors of the Communists to win legitimacy among workers in the region.⁸ Pittaway continuously reflects on the theses that can be found in the international secondary literature on the subject, and his monograph reinterprets and enlarges on the conclusions of E. P. Thompson’s fundamental work on the creation of the English working class.⁹ He is thoroughly familiar with the subject, as evidenced by the fact that he wrote a separate comparative volume on the social history of the socialist bloc that has become obligatory reading at universities throughout the world and one of the best summaries of

6 Miklós Lackó, *Ipari munkásságunk összetételének alakulása. 1867–1949* [The Transformation of the Composition of our Industrial Working Class] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1961); György Litván, ed., *Magyar munkásszociográfiák* [Hungarian Workers’ Sociographies] (Budapest: MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 1974); István Kemény, *Velük nevelkedett a gép* [The Machine was Reared with Them] (Budapest: Művelődéskutató Intézet, 1990); Gábor Gyáni, *Bérlakásárnya és nyomortelep: a budapesti munkáslakás múltja* [Tenement Building and Slum: The History of Workers’ Lodgings in Budapest] (Budapest: Magvető, 1992); László Varga, *Az elhagyott tömeg: tanulmányok 1950–1956-ról* [The Abandoned Crowd: Studies on 1950–1956] (Budapest: Cserépfalvi–Budapest Főváros Levéltára, 1994).

7 Belényi, *Az állam szorításában*; Sándor Horváth, László Pethő and Eszter Zsófia Tóth, *Munkástörténet, munkásantropológia* [Labor History, Labor Anthropology] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2003); Eszter Zsófia Tóth, “Puszi Kádár Jánosnak”: munkásnők élete a Kádár-korszakban mikrotörténeti megközelítésben [“Kisses for János Kádár”: The Lives of Working Women in the Kádár Era, from the Perspective of a Micro-historical Analysis] (Budapest: Napvilág, 2007); the special issue “Labor of Postwar Central and Eastern Europe” of the journal *International Labor and Working-Class History* 68, Fall (2005); and among the most recent works: Eszter Bartha, *Alienating Labour: Workers on the Road from Socialism to Capitalism in East Germany and Hungary* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).

8 Two important works that influenced Pittaway in his choice of topics: Alf Lüdtke: *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus*. (Hamburg: Ergebnisse-Verlag, 1993); Pádraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

9 Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963).

3 See Gyula Kozák and Adrienne Molnár, eds., “*Szuronyok hegyén nem lehet dolgozni!*”: válogatás 1956-os munkástanács-vezetők visszaemlékezéseiből [“You Can Not Work at Gun-Point!”: A Selection from the Memoires of Leaders of the 1956 Workers’ Councils] (Budapest: Századvég–1956-os Intézet, 1993).

4 Cf. Gyula Belényi, *Az állam szorításában: az ipari munkásság társadalmi átalakulása Magyarországon, 1945–1965* [In the Vice of the State: The Social Transformation of the Industrial Working Class in Hungary, 1944–1965] (Szeged: Belvedere Meridionale, 2009).

5 Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958); Bill Lomax, ed., *Hungarian Workers’ Councils in 1956* (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 1990); Bill Lomax, *Hungary 1956* (London: Allen and Busby, 1976); Tamás Krausz, “Az 1956-os munkástanácsokról” [On the 1956 Workers’ Councils], *Eszmélet* 18, no. 72 (Winter 2006): 32–38.

the postwar history of the region.¹⁰ He boldly and confidently transgresses the borders established by political history. For instance, in his assessment in many of the social processes in Eastern Europe World War II did not constitute a caesura, and he traces with similar confidence the threads of continuity and discontinuity in the social history of the working class. According to Pittaway, 1945, 1948, and 1956 constituted pivotal moments only to the extent that they prompted changes in the political views of the workers of *Újpest, Tatabánya*, or *Zala* County. Thus, paradoxically his book also examines how the Kádár system came into being, the antecedents to it, and the processes whereby it was able to consolidate its power (and from this perspective 1945 and 1947 were as much antecedents as 1953).

Pittaway does not attempt to establish consensus in the debates regarding the debates on modernization,¹¹ nor does he bother attempting to reconcile the oppositions of the “movements” of “political” and “social history”. He puts these debates in parentheses. He examines simply the fluctuating legitimacy of the Communists and the system and the ways in which actors at various levels of power and in various social spaces influenced one another. The subject at hand (political support, or lack thereof) can be understood as political history, but in the course of his study Pittaway uses all of the methods and sources that a social or cultural historian would use.

The task Pittaway sets for himself is not easy. Even the question of the precise meaning of the term legitimacy can be problematic, not to mention the issue of how one can use sources that for the most part were produced by the regime itself to assess the amount of support it actually had in the factories. For this reason, the study of the limits of power and the various forms of support requires new tools. Anyone who knew Pittaway may well be surprised by the methodological rigor with which he constructs his narrative. He read an enormous amount about the living conditions and everyday lives of the working class in Hungary, but the reader can glimpse this vast knowledge only through the very small, carefully selected stories he provides. A serious task demands a serious scholar. The monograph is not the work of Mark, who loved to recount captivating stories of the working class, but rather Pittaway, the highly disciplined scholar, who writes with none of the irony or humor so distinctive of Mark. It

is a dramatic story without catharsis in which every anecdote has an important function.

The form of the narrative, which is told chronologically and is set in three different industrial(izing) settlements (*Újpest, Tatabánya* and *Zala* county), enables Pittaway to portray the reactions of the workers as rational. At the beginning of each chapter he describes the political context in Hungary, which presumably is largely unfamiliar to the average non-Hungarian reader, and then goes into the “depths,” the factories and the workshop floors. *Újpest*, which had a long history as an industrialized settlement, *Tatabánya*, which had grown administratively to absorb nearby mining colonies and had been elevated to the status of a city, and *Zala* county (and within *Zala* county the area around the city of *Letenye*), which had only begun to serve as a home to the oil industry but was otherwise largely dependent on agriculture, provide in and of themselves an opportunity for comparison. As the narrative progresses, it seems to have a diverse array of implications, and the theses are so logical that at times it is almost disquieting.

The differences between imagined industrial workers (the notion of the worker as used in the idiom crafted by the Communists) and real industrial workers are always present in Pittaway’s analyses. He cites a 1958 report of a party committee to make these differences palpable. At the dawn of the Kádár era, when, given the significant rise in wages and the arrests, hardly anyone in the factories in the city would have considered going on strike, Lajos Kelemen, a party secretary in *Kőbánya*,¹² openly contended—no doubt to the astonishment of many—that the emperor had no clothes, for the workers, the workers’ state was alas not the best of all possible worlds. “Part of the working class simply doesn’t agree with us. They just do not accept this system.” (p.14) His words were recorded, and they were met with replies. But Kelemen was not punished, rather his statement was used to further the consolidation of the new system. For a time the king acknowledged that he had no clothes, which considerably increased his credibility. The legitimacy of the Kádár system rested to a great extent on its efforts to distance itself from the Rákosi regime, which from the perspective of the hardships faced by the industrial working class meant that after 1956 the origins of every problem were traced back to the early 1950s. Indeed it may well have seemed that Kádár himself had risen to power in order to break with the past and see that justice be done.

¹⁰ Mark Pittaway, *Eastern Europe 1939–2000* (London: Arnold, 2004).

¹¹ Michael David-Fox, “Multiple Modernities vs. Neo-Traditionalism. On Recent Debates in Russian and Soviet History,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 54 (2006): 535–55.

¹² *Kőbánya* was a traditionally industrial district of Budapest.

The first chapter of the book begins in March 1944 with the occupation of the country by the German army and narrates the case studies that took place in the three regions up until November 1945, examining what the workers themselves sought (primarily stability) and what they were given or at least hoped to be given by the Communists (and this differed in each of the three areas). Pittaway's approach sheds light on methodological problems as well, since the historian is compelled to reply for the most part on the minutes of party meetings, official reports regarding the prevailing mood (*hangulatjelentés*), and newspaper articles when drawing conclusions—tentatively—on the expectations of workers. In any event Újpest seems to have been the only place—and not because of the Újpest partisans (p.31)—where communism was not perceived simply as an exotic import brought by the Soviet army. In the case of Tatabánya, in contrast, Pittaway traces the first successes of the Communists back to the power vacuum left after the fall of the Arrow Cross. In Zala, a county consisting largely of small villages that had been particularly hard hit by the pillaging of the Soviet soldiers, the Communist Party had little chance of any similar attainments. A picture begins to emerge of the workers as a class that was politically active during the war. Disinterest in politics was rare among workers who, some decades later, would sometimes have to explain to their descendants what the word “strike” meant (though it's true that in the meantime workers had found other means of holding back production).¹³ The book offers illuminating comparisons of why the Communist rhetoric, which hammered in the notion that the Communists had arrived as liberators, was received differently in each of the three places in question and how the workers' strikes in the summer and autumn of 1945, soon before the elections, influenced people's assessments of the party.

According to Pittaway, the elections that were held in November 1945 shattered the Communists' illusion that they would rise to power without any kind of transition and with the backing of the Soviets. After the elections, the Communist Party was compelled to make proposals to the working class that would help it win their support. However, whether or not a political party enjoyed support depended not on the promises it made, but rather on its credibility. The results of the 1947 elections were more favorable for the Communists specifically because they found themselves in the opposition in 1945. The voters

of Tatabánya or Újpest did not have more faith in the Communists because the Communists had made enticing promises, but rather because the governing parties, which had a penchant for populist pledges, were not able to make good on their promises. On the local level, members of the social democratic party were seen as people who were close to the institutions of power (pp.67–8). This enabled the Communist Party to win considerable support in industrial districts in 1947. Pittaway does not explain this as a consequence of national political developments. He does not characterize the period between 1945 and 1948 as an attempt to create a state founded on the rule of law, but rather as years in which the Communists used populist tools to attempt to win support for their goals among a segment of society. In his assessment, the decisions of voters were influenced by local experiences and circumstances on the shop floor (rises in wages, a strike, a local demonstration, for instance on May 1, 1946 in Újpest, when the Hungarian Communist Party and the Hungarian Socialist Democratic Party together managed to mobilize 25,000 people). At the same time, there is still room for further research. Pittaway analyzes the election data on smaller settlements, but he does not attempt to explain why the differences were so striking between individual villages (in the case of the county of Zala) and parts of the city (in the case of Tatabánya). As is the case with the results of the 1947 elections, these differences cannot be explained simply as a result of voter fraud.

The third chapter (which examines the period between 1947 and 1949) may well give rise to numerous differences of opinion among Hungarian historians who are debating the significance of 1949, a year often regarded as a turning point. The title of the chapter (*Social Roots of Dictatorship*) is in itself provocative, since it implies that the dictatorship was not simply an aberrance that was concocted in the witch's kitchen of the Communist Party and imposed by the Soviets. Pittaway examines the measures that were taken in order to win some social support in the course of the creation of the dictatorship. Through the use of populist rhetoric, the party managed to gain acceptance for the appointment of workers' directors and the nationalization of factories (which according to the Communists had been ruthlessly exploited by the capitalists and had finally found trustworthy caregivers in the state) without even having to rely on the State Security, effectively the secret police (pp.86–8). One could mention, for instance, the “potato crisis” in Tatabánya, which involved a strike that broke out in Tatabánya because of the shortage of potatoes (which in the 1950s were one of the primary foodstuffs). In the course of the strike the local organization of the Hungarian Communist Party blamed “speculators” (implicitly “Jewish

13 Cf. Lajos Héthy and Csaba Makó, *Munkásmagatartások és gazdasági szervezet* [Worker Behavior and Economic Organization] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1972).

speculators”) for the shortage. With nationalization and this anti-Semitic rhetoric, the Hungarian Communist Party managed to gain significant support in Tatabánya.

This political popularity disappeared rapidly, however, when the workers found themselves in the world not of visions and promises, but rather of economic measures adopted by a party, the Communist Party, that found itself compelled to increase economic efficiency. On the level of the factory floors, the greatest conflict was caused by the introduction of a system of wages based on the Soviet model, which on the local level meant the end of populist communism (though it did not prevent the reproduction of class hierarchy). A mining accident in Tatabánya on December 30, 1950 that was caused indirectly by measures taken to increase production had a permanent effect on attitudes towards the Rákosi system in the community (p.130). The most interesting and most valuable parts of the book are Pittaway’s analyses of the similarities and differences between the three areas, Újpest, Tatabánya and Zala. He reveals differences in micro-communities that for the most part would remain indistinct, homogenous masses in macro-analyses, for instance the industrial working class itself, the different layers of which have been ascribed with varying significances in the creation of the socialist system.

László Varga and Gyula Belényi have already studied the conflicts between the “new,” “transitional” workers¹⁴ (rural, young, often female) and the old, trained workers in Hungary.¹⁵ Pittaway’s monograph, however, is the first work of scholarship to examine how, after 1956, the Kádár government was compelled because of these conflicts to establish legitimacy for itself in an entirely new social milieu, as well as the tools it used in the service of this goal. Pittaway touches on sensitive questions. The workers of Újpest who on October 23, 1956 radicalized the demonstration by the youth (p.209) and later took active part in the organization of the workers’ councils were among the first to be given raises in 1957. In 1957 workers’ wages were increased by 18 percent (p.233), although this in and of itself was not adequate to ensure support for the Kádár system among a significant segment of the working class. According to Pittaway, the answer to the question of why the government was not compelled on May 1

to use the workers’ militia to get workers to participate in the parades and why János Kádár himself did not fear an attempt on his life during the celebrations lies in the shrewd mix of the official rhetoric and a politics focused on standards of living.

Mark Pittaway’s monograph occupies a place of distinction not only in the scholarship on the political engagement of the industrial workers in Hungary, but in the research on the history of the industrial workers in Europe. It situates the attempt to create Socialism in Hungary in an international context and thus provides a point of departure for further comparative study. Pittaway’s research, work that spanned a decade and a half, has revitalized scholarship on the subject, which had been increasingly marginalized in the historiography.¹⁶ In all likelihood his monograph will influence research on the lives and experiences of industrial workers, who represented the largest social bloc and whose living conditions should therefore be in the forefront of scholarship on the era, for decades.

Sándor Horváth

14 On the “transitional types of workers” see László Pethő, “A vidéki munkásság antropológiája” [An Anthropology of the Rural Working Class], in *Paraszti múlt és jelen az ezredfordulón* [Peasant Past and Present at the Turn of the Millennium], ed. Miklós Cseri, László Kósa, and Ibolya T. Bereczki (Szentendre: Magyar Néprajzi Társaság–Szentendrei Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum, 2000), 423–42.

15 Belényi, *Az állam szorításában*; Varga, *Az elbagyott tömeg*.

16 See the special issue of the *International Review of Social History*. Marcel van der Linden, ed., *The End of Labour History?* 38, no. 1 (1993).

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